

THE ARGONAUT

JOURNAL OF THE SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY





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Journal of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Hermann Richter painting, July 1938. Discovery of the California Poppy by Chamisso and Eschscholz, 1816. This is a painting commissioned by the University of California, Berkeley, for exhibition at the Golden Gate International Exposition at Treasure Island, 1939. It is one of a series of paintings, now displayed at the university’s Museum of Natural History, depicting important botanical discoveries made during early expeditions to California. The artist is Hermann Richter (1875–1941), whose work may be best seen in San Francisco at Schroeder’s German Restaurant in the form of large murals dating from 1932. Richter used Louis Choris’s painting, *Vue du Presidio San Francisco*, as a model for the Presidio buildings and the landscape, adding the figures of Chamisso (left) and Eschscholtz, the naturalists from Rurik. Note that Richter took care to show Chamisso’s trademark long hair and unusual clothing. Courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley, CA and Jepson Herbaria.

THE VOYAGE OF THE RURIK:

An Historic 1816 Russian Voyage to San Francisco Bay

by Paul Gary Sterling

INTRODUCTION

In October of 1816, a contingent of about seventy unhappy soldiers was manning *El Presidio de San Francisco*, the northernmost Spanish outpost in *Alta California*.¹ Spain's colonial Empire was crumbling. The Mexican independence movement had begun in 1810 and wars of independence had broken out in other Spanish colonies. After a long engagement in the Napoleonic Wars, including the occupation of Spain by France until 1814, Spain had meager resources to support its colonies. Shipments of supplies urgently needed by the Presidio could no longer be relied upon, and the annual supply ship from San Blas, Mexico had not been seen for years.

Unlike the Franciscan missionaries in the Mission a few hours to the south,² soldiers at the Presidio had little access to fresh food and subsisted mainly on corn. Even such food as could be obtained from the Mission was received only on credit. The soldiers were also unhappy because they had not been paid in cash for seven years. The Presidio was nevertheless required to assist not only the San Francisco Mission, but the missions at Santa Clara, San Jose, and Santa Cruz. Its duties included defending the missions from Indians and helping to ensure that those converted remained in the faith.

At 4:00 p.m. on October 2, 1816, something unusual occurred. An unknown sailing vessel entered the Golden Gate, anchoring off the Presidio. This was a rare sight indeed, since few vessels, Spanish or foreign, visited San Francisco

Bay.³ Passing the fort at the entrance to the Bay,⁴ the captain, Otto von Kotzebue, noted with some trepidation "one must sail past within a musket shot of the fort." The ship raised its flag, the ensign of the Russian Imperial Navy (displaying a blue "X" on a white field), which was not recognized by those on shore. After identifying itself by voice as the *Rurik*, a "friendly" Russian vessel, the ship fired a seven-gun salute, which, to the captain's displeasure, was returned by only five guns from the Presidio. The ship anchored, awaiting a welcoming vessel to be dispatched from shore. The Presidio's launch, however, had been destroyed in a storm a few months earlier. When no vessel appeared to greet *Rurik* within the hour, captain Kotzebue sent a party ashore, including the ship's naturalist and interpreter, Adelbert von Chamisso, and his second officer.

Thus began, in fits and starts, one of the earliest well-documented visits to San Francisco Bay. The *Rurik's* month-long sojourn resulted in major scientific discoveries, including, among many others, the first published descriptions and illustrations of the California grizzly bear and California's State Flower, the California Poppy. Major narratives of *Rurik's* stay in San Francisco were written by three of the participants in her voyage, and detailed the daily life of soldiers, missionaries, and Native Americans at the Presidio and Mission.⁵ These first-hand accounts provide a rare portrait of San Francisco in its earliest days, as it appeared to sophisticated visitors of the time. The vessel's artist, Louis Choris, painted, and



First published depiction of San Francisco, attributed to Georg von Langsdorff, and the only published San Francisco illustration prior to the work of Louis Choris. Langsdorff was the naturalist on the Russian ship *Juno*, which visited San Francisco in 1806, ten years before Rurik arrived. The Presidio is shown on bluff in background. Courtesy of the author.

later published in Paris, historic depictions of life at the Presidio and Mission using the then newly developed process of lithography. His paintings are the first detailed images of the activities and dress of Native Americans at San Francisco. The Choris lithographs have been reproduced in countless histories of early San Francisco and California, including full-color reproductions in Charles Fracchia's history of San Francisco, *Fire & Gold*.⁶ Less known is the story behind them.

THE RURIK'S VOYAGE AROUND THE WORLD AND THE POLITICS OF THE TIME

The Russian brig *Rurik* (also "Ryurik" or "Riurik," named after the semi-mythical, ninth century founder of the Russian Empire) had been newly built in Abo, Finland. She was a two-masted sailing vessel with a displacement of 180 tons and

a complement of about thirty people. No expense had been spared in her construction, and *Rurik* boasted the leading technology of the day, including the first ice-making machine on an ocean voyage. Innovation, however, didn't come easily. The ice machine worked, but an invention for preserving perishable foods was only partially successful. A revolutionary lifeboat with watertight compartments, a "safety boat," eventually had to be abandoned because it was too heavy.⁷ The crew members even chipped in to buy an organ, which the captain promptly ordered removed because it took up too much valuable space.

Rurik was on an around-the-world voyage. On July 30, 1815, she had departed Kronstadt, an island port near St. Petersburg, and, after a difficult passage around Cape Horn in which the vessel was damaged and the captain injured, she stopped in Chile. She next sailed to Easter Island and other Pacific Islands before heading north all the way to Siberia and Alaska, then owned by Russia. After repairs were made to the vessel and further preparations finished for her voyage, she sailed south to San Francisco to replenish food supplies before continuing on to Hawaii and the South Seas.

Although privately funded and directed as a scientific expedition by a Russian nobleman, Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumyantsev,⁸ *Rurik* was a vessel of the Russian Imperial Navy, carrying eight cannon. Count Rumyantsev had ensured that, as a man-of-war, she fly the ensign of the Russian Imperial Navy (not a foregone conclusion for a vessel of exploration) in order to command due respect, not only at foreign ports of call, but also at the Russian colonies in Alaska. The stated goal of her voyage was to discover a "Northwest Passage" (or "Northeast Passage," as the Russians called it, approaching from the Pacific) across the top of North America. This sea route, long sought by many countries, was needed by Russia to facilitate travel to her North American colonies and substantially reduce the two years required to ship goods across Siberia. The Count, who even chose the name *Rurik*, had originally planned to build two vessels to search for a passage from each side of the North



Count Nikolai Rumyantsev, the Russian nobleman and statesman who sponsored the *Rurik's* voyage, as well as other voyages of exploration. Courtesy of Google images.

American continent. This plan was abandoned in favor of one vessel, the *Rurik*.⁹

Before retiring in 1814 as chancellor of the Russian Empire, a position akin to minister of foreign affairs, Count Rumyantsev had been primarily responsible for Russia's foreign policy, including relations with Spain. In his earlier post as minister of commerce, he was in charge of the Russian-American Company, chartered by the czar in 1799, which operated Russia's North American colonies. Count Rumyantsev had also funded the 1806 voyage of the first Russian vessel to visit San Francisco, the Russian-American Company vessel *Juno*,¹⁰ led by Nicolai Rezanov, a founder of the company and Russia's former ambassador to Japan. Rezanov's task had been to

attempt the development of Russo-Spanish trade, badly needed to support Russia's Alaskan colonies and, most urgently at that time, to bring food to starving colonists in Sitka, Alaska.

Chamberlain (not "Count," as is sometimes reported) Nicolai Rezanov, the leader of the 1806 voyage, is best remembered today for his ill-fated romance with Maria (Dona) de la Concepción, 15-year-old daughter of the Presidio commandant Jose Dario Argüello, when *Juno* visited in April 1806. (Widower Rezanov was 42, a perfectly acceptable age difference in those days.) Concepción Argüello was thus the sister of Luis Antonio Argüello, the acting commandant during *Rurik's* visit. After his formal betrothal to Concepción, Nicolai Rezanov was practically considered a member of the Argüello family and, largely for this reason, was successful in his quest to obtain a full cargo of foodstuffs for famine-stricken Sitka.¹¹

Rurik's arrival occurred at a particularly crucial period in San Francisco history, when San Francisco Bay marked the confluence of the spheres of influence of Spain and Russia, the major European powers in Western North America. The personal finances of her sponsor, Count Rumyantsev, were directly tied to Russia's North American colonies and it would be unrealistic to expect that his foreign policy interests had evaporated upon his retirement as Russia's chancellor only one year earlier. He is thus the enigmatic figure in the *Rurik* saga and his goals in sponsoring the voyage have long been debated and discussed among historians. *Rurik* carried a black marble bust of the count in her wardroom, an object of considerable curiosity and amusement to shipboard visitors.

In his leading work on *Rurik's* San Francisco visit, *The Visit of the Rurik to San Francisco in 1816*,¹² Prof. August C. Mahr contends that Count Rumyantsev's primary goal in sponsoring *Rurik's* voyage was political and not scientific, i.e., to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Spanish military and political resources at San Francisco. Prof. Mahr writes that *Rurik* was, in effect, on a spy mission for Count Rumyantsev, going so far as to call Capt. Kotzebue a "secret



Nicolai Rezanov.
Courtesy of Google images.

agent."¹³ Some of the circumstances of *Rurik's* stay in San Francisco are indeed unusual and appear to support Mahr's opinion. Further research, however, leads to the conclusion that Prof. Mahr was, in this regard, mostly tilting at windmills.

Both Prof. Mahr's book and the more recent book by Edward Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes*,¹⁴ focus upon a study of *Rurik's* San Francisco visit. While both authors made excellent translations of Chamisso's San Francisco journals, neither apparently translated those portions of Chamisso's journals relating to the rest of *Rurik's* voyage (at least none appear in their books). Those journals, however, were translated by Prof. Henry Kratz for his book covering the entire voyage, *A Voyage Around the World with the Romanzov*

Exploring Expedition in the Years 1815–1818.¹⁵ Dr. Kratz's translations include Chamisso's journal for the portion of *Rurik's* voyage immediately preceding her arrival at San Francisco. On September 14, 1816, she had departed from Unalashka, an island in the Aleutians (not to be confused with the city of Unalaska). That portion of the journal surprisingly discloses that San Francisco was not even on *Rurik's* original itinerary:

We headed [from Unalashka] for San Francisco in New California. Mr. von Kotzebue had been instructed to head for the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii] from Unalashka and had obtained very good information about them from the ships' captains of the Russian-American company. Kotzebue had preferred that port (San Francisco) to the islands, where the frequency of shipping has increased the price of all necessities and where payment can be made only with Spanish piasters or with copper plates, weapons, or the like, for the rest and recreation of his crew and the provisioning of the *Rurik*.¹⁶

There is no reason to doubt Chamisso's account that Capt. Kotzebue decided, en route, to substitute San Francisco as a provisioning port of call because of cost and convenience of payment. It follows, of course, that the major purpose of the voyage, as directed by Count Rumyantsev, could not have been an investigation into Spanish resources at San Francisco. This is not to say that San Francisco was not an alternative port from the beginning (as indicated by evidence that the Spanish had received prior official notice of *Rurik's* possible arrival in San Francisco). Neither does it mean that the strength of Spanish resources at San Francisco was not a matter of considerable interest to the Russians in general and to Count Rumyantsev in particular. It clearly was. Chamisso's explanation, however, confirms that the scientific and exploratory aspects of *Rurik's* voyage

were, as publically announced, her primary purpose. This is consistent with the count's laudatory, lifelong interest and investment in matters of science. It is likewise consistent with the count's original, seldom-mentioned plan to build two vessels to engage in the search for a Northwest Passage. More importantly, perhaps, Chamisso's journal also establishes that, even two hundred years ago, San Francisco was a great place for a sailor's shore leave.

Before Nicolai Rezanov died in March 1817 while attempting to return to St. Petersburg from Siberia on horseback, he had recommended to the Russian-American Company that a settlement be established north of San Francisco to support the companies colonies in North America. Between 1808 and 1812, Ivan Aleksandrovich Kuskov (or "Kuskoff"), a senior official of the Russian-American Company, led several expeditions to California to locate a suitable site. In 1812, construction was begun on what was to become Fort Ross, Russia's large trading and agricultural base, located in present-day Sonoma County. Fort Ross was substantially complete by the time of *Rurik's* arrival, with Kuskov then serving as commandant, or administrator, of the settlement. *Rurik*, however, had too deep a draft (greater than nine feet) to permit a landing there, which is why she sailed past the fort directly to San Francisco.



Fort Ross, Sonoma County, CA. Courtesy of Google images.



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. Bateau du port de San Francisco. Indians in tule, or reed, canoe on San Francisco Bay. This was the Indians' only means of water transportation. The canoes were not meant to be watertight. Courtesy of the author.

A smaller and older Russian base, founded by Kuskov in 1809, was only thirty miles north of San Francisco at Bodega Bay. This fort was considered by the Spanish to be indisputably in their territory. The Russians, however, did not formally recognize Spanish authority north of San Francisco. The Russian name for Bodega Bay was Rummyantsev Bay, or Port Rummyantsev, having been named in 1812 in honor of *Rurik's* sponsor, Count Rummyantsev.¹⁷ Also named for the count was the first seagoing vessel built in California, a brig-schooner of 160 tons constructed at Fort Ross from 1816 to 1819 (which, constructed from uncured lumber, survived only a few years).

The primary purpose of Russia's California out-

posts was to support Russia's profitable trade in sea otter furs, mainly with China (where they were greatly prized and called "Imperial Furs"), as sea otters were becoming increasingly scarce in northern waters. The Russians even established summer hunting bases on the Farallon Islands, within sight of the Golden Gate, and the hunting by Russians of sea otters within San Francisco Bay itself was not uncommon. Large numbers of native Alaskan hunters from Kodiak Island, *Aleuts*, were brought to Russia's California outposts with great success. The *Aleuts* were skilled in hunting sea otters from sealskin-covered canoes called *bidarkas*. (*Bidarkas* were also carried on *Rurik* for coastal exploration.) In 1811,

Mission Indians, acting for the Spanish, observed 130 canoes hunting sea otters near the entrance to San Francisco Bay.

Beginning in 1811, the San Francisco Presidio sent its second-highest ranking officer, Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga, to investigate Russian activities at Bodega Bay and later at Fort Ross. He was greeted by the Russians in a friendly manner, probably because he arrived prepared to engage in surreptitious trade. Lt. Moraga continued his trading (and inspection) visits for several years, at the same time relaying to the Russians formal Spanish demands that the fort be evacuated—demands which, it can reasonably be concluded, were not taken very seriously by either party. In 1814 Lt. Moraga reported on the considerable cannon guarding the fort under construction, as well as the most amazing sight of all: glass windows in the Commandant's quarters.

The *Rurik* thus arrived in San Francisco well aware of official Spanish outrage over Russian incursions into what they considered their territory, as well as the Russians' violation of Spanish law strictly prohibiting the hunting of sea otters.¹⁸ However, the San Francisco Presidio, in its dire circumstances, had no resources to challenge the Russian settlements or the hunting of sea otters. The Spanish were, in fact, compelled by necessity to trade with the Russians, exchanging food needed by the Russians in their new colony for tools, cloth, and other basic supplies—trade which the new Spanish governor at Monterey, Pablo Vicente de Sola, called smuggling, although he, too, sometimes looked the other way.¹⁹

THE INTRIGUING MEN WHO SAILED RURIK

Three participants in *Rurik's* voyage have gained a place in history; partly because each left behind a published record of her voyage, including her month long visit to San Francisco, but also because of their exceptional talents. The *Rurik's* captain was Otto von Kotzebue, a lieutenant in the Russian navy who, despite being only 28 years of age (all ages are stated as of the



Otto von Kotzebue. Courtesy of Google images.

commencement of the *Rurik's* voyage), had served as a cadet in the first circumnavigation of the world under the Russian flag.²⁰ He himself was an amateur naturalist, a field, as will be seen, in which *Rurik* had no shortage of talent. Because of this personal interest, Kotzebue provided strong support for his vessel's endeavors in natural history—in stark contrast to his predecessors in San Francisco, Vancouver and Rezanov, who can only be said to have sabotaged the efforts of their naturalists. The captain was best known, even at *Rurik's* foreign ports of call, as the son of August von Kotzebue, a world-famous German author and playwright. The *Rurik* was Otto von Kotzebue's first command.

The second notable person on *Rurik*, and its most intriguing, was its naturalist, interpreter, and "titular scholar," as he was known, Adelbert von Chamisso, born Louis Charles Adelaide de Chamisso de Boncourt, a member of a French noble family. During the French Revolution,

when Chamisso was only nine, his family's ancestral castle was destroyed and they were forced to flee to Germany. In 1796, at the age of fifteen, he obtained a position as a page for Louise, wife of the notorious Prussian emperor, Wilhelm Frederich. Two years later, he enlisted as an ensign in the Prussian army and in 1801 was promoted to lieutenant. Chamisso, however, was not suited to military life. When he was able to do so, he returned to Berlin and entered the German literary world, writing plays and poetry in both French and German, as well as publishing a literary magazine, *Muses' Almanac*.

A Renaissance man of his day, Chamisso studied botany, anatomy, and other scientific pursuits at the University of Berlin. He was also an accomplished artist. He loved languages and somehow found time to become fluent in Spanish, as well as his native French and German, not to mention Greek and Latin. He even acquired enough English to relish Shakespeare, although, Chamisso says, the only

time he saw an Englishman laugh was when he tried to speak English to him. He also found time to engage in a string of well-documented romances, mainly with women of the literary world. With good looks, long and flowing hair, and a penchant for unusual and colorful clothing, he cut a striking figure.

When the war with Napoleon broke out, however, Chamisso was required to return to military service. He avoided having to fight his own French countrymen only because his garrison ignominiously surrendered without a shot being fired—no doubt to Chamisso's great relief. After being discharged from the army, he lived in both France and Germany, but felt, as he wrote to a friend, "I am nowhere at home." The world of science became his refuge. Chamisso's real fame, nevertheless, arose in the field of literature. In 1813, he was inspired to write an allegorical fairy tale about Peter Schlemiehl,²¹ who sells his shadow to the devil and finds himself shunned by all. Refusing to give up his soul to regain his shadow, he travels throughout the world in scientific pursuits—a man without a country.



Chamisso as a young man. Courtesy of Google images.



One of many cover illustrations worldwide for Chamisso's famous fairy tale, "Peter Schlemiehl's Remarkable Story." It was through this fairy tale, published two years before Rurik's voyage, that he first became known as an author. Courtesy of Google images.



The name of Chamisso's character, Peter Schlemiehl, is taken from the Yiddish word *schlemiel*, a hopelessly incompetent person. Chamisso's book, originally written as a fairy tale for the children of a friend, is by no means obscure, even today, and can easily be obtained from scores of online booksellers. The story has been translated into English (most recently in 1993) and into practically every European language. It was performed on American television in 1953, starring DeForest Kelley of *Star Trek* fame, and is a subject of worldwide popular culture to the present day. The parallels with Chamisso's own life are striking and even seem to foretell his *Rurik* adventure, as Chamisso himself later recognized.

Chamisso read about the planned *Rurik* voyage in a newspaper and obtained recommendations from two of his professors for the position of voyage naturalist, where his ambiguous nationality and political beliefs would be irrelevant. His primary duties on the *Rurik*'s voyage were collecting and identifying flora and fauna. While in San Francisco during late October and early November, during which time Chamisso was mostly presented with "a dry and arid field," he nevertheless collected approximately seventy different plants, including two new genera and thirty-three new species.

Best known among Chamisso's discoveries is the California Poppy, found on the Presidio's grounds, for which Chamisso chose a Latin generic name, *Eschscholtzia californica*, honoring *Rurik*'s doctor, Johann Friedrich Eschscholtz—also an accomplished naturalist and Chamisso's friend and assistant on *Rurik*. The species designation of the California Poppy is reportedly the first use of "California" in scientific nomenclature. (To reciprocate the honor, Eschscholtz named a beetle after Chamisso.)²²

Chamisso, of course, did not really discover the California Poppy. It had long been used by Indians for its mild narcotic properties. The Spanish sometimes called it *Copa de Oro*, "Cup of Gold." Fields of seemingly endless poppies could be seen from miles at sea, causing the California coastline to be described as *La Tierra del Fuego*,



Illustration of the California Poppy, the California State Flower, drawn from Chamisso's original botanical specimen, first classified and described by him as a result of *Rurik*'s San Francisco visit. This image was used to illustrate Chamisso's original botanical description of the flower.
Courtesy of Google images.

"Land of Fire."²³ (Such vistas may be viewed today only at the Antelope Valley Poppy Reserve.) The poppy had even been collected in Monterey by the naturalist on Vancouver's vessel, *Discovery*, but erroneously described as identical to a European species.²⁴ Chamisso, however, was an expert taxonomist; his detailed botanical description of the California Poppy is all but indecipherable to the layman.

Chamisso was interested in everything he saw, including the plight of Native Americans and their disappearing history. As he stated in his memoir: "Every fragment of the history of man is



Hermann Richter painting, July 1938. Discovery of the California Poppy by Chamisso and Eschscholz, 1816. This is a painting commissioned by the University of California, Berkeley, for exhibition at the Golden Gate International Exposition at Treasure Island, 1939. It is one of a series of paintings, now displayed at the university's Museum of Natural History, depicting important botanical discoveries made during early expeditions to California. The artist is Hermann Richter (1875–1941), whose work may be best seen in San Francisco at Schroeder's German Restaurant in the form of large murals dating from 1932. Richter used Louis Choris's painting, *Vue du Presidio San Francisco*, as a model for the Presidio buildings and the landscape, adding the figures of Chamisso (left) and Eschscholtz, the naturalists from *Rurik*. Note that Richter took care to show Chamisso's trademark long hair and unusual clothing. Courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley, CA and Jepson Herbaria.

of importance." At the advanced age of thirty-three, he was the "old man" on *Rurik*.

While most voyage narratives are rather dry reports by ship captains (and Kotzebue's are certainly above average), in Chamisso we have the advantage of a shipboard participant and scientifically trained observer who also happens to be a talented writer and poet. His accounts are as engrossing as they are informative—comparable in many ways to Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*

(1839), published only three years after Chamisso's *Diary or Journal* (1836). Like *Voyage of the Beagle*, Chamisso's *Diary* is an informal and entertaining account of a long and varied sea voyage, based loosely upon the personal journal of the vessel's naturalist. Darwin had obviously read Chamisso's writings, referring to him in *Beagle* as "the justly famous naturalist who accompanied Kotzebue." (Chamisso's more formal *Remarks and Opinions*, or *Notes and Opinions*, his one-volume

contribution to the official report on *Rurik's* voyage, had been earlier published in 1821.) Chamisso's writings can stand on their own merits as literature and would be much better known in the United States, as they are Europe, had they been written originally in English.

The third notable member of the *Rurik* crew was of lower status, but his contributions to our understanding of San Francisco in those early times is of equal or even greater importance. He was Louis, or Ludovik, Choris, the ship's artist, a twenty-year-old Ukranian Russian of German ancestry. Choris has been described by University of California Professor Thomas C. Blackburn as "one of the most talented artists of California Native American life during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."²⁵

Like Chamisso, Choris had no prior seagoing experience, having only served as an artist, at age

eighteen, on the Biberstein botanical expedition to the Caucasus Mountains. He had about one year's formal training at the Academy of Art in St. Petersburg. His instructors were sufficiently impressed to recommend him for the position of *Rurik's* artist, or "draftsman." As described in Choris's own words:

At scarcely twenty years of age, I went as draftsman with this expedition, the expenses of which were paid by Count Romanzoff, Chancellor of the Russian Empire. During the course of this voyage, which lasted three years, all the objects which struck my youthful imagination and my eyes were gathered and drawn by me, sometimes with the leisure permitted by an extended sojourn, sometimes with the rapidity made necessary by a short appearance.²⁶



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. *Vue du Presidio San Francisco.* The enclosed portion of the Presidio is depicted in the left center, with numerous trails crossing the vacant land. At right center is a portion of the bay, with *Rurik* at anchor, Choris's only depiction of *Rurik* in San Francisco. Choris's original painting did not include the two Spaniards on horseback or the Indians they are directing. With the sole exception of the lone, galloping rider, Choris later added all of the human figures shown on the lithograph. Courtesy of the author.



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. Entrance to San Francisco Bay, also showing Farallon Islands, to be used as navigational aid.
Courtesy of the author.

He later wrote,

I reproduced, for the most part, characteristic portraits of the peoples visited by the *Rurik*, including habitations, arms, musical instruments, and ornaments; and a few landscapes that I had drawn.²⁷

During the month of October 1816, while *Rurik* was at San Francisco, Choris completed drawings and watercolors that are the most detailed and informative images in existence of Native Americans at the Mission and Presidio during this early period of San Francisco history. Several of his lithographs, published in Paris in 1822, are shown here. (The content and making of the Choris lithographs will be discussed later in this article.) Chamisso honored Choris by naming a California plant species after him, the Choris's Popcorn-flower.

RURIK AT THE PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO

Although Capt. Kotzebue had in his possession a "passport" issued by the Spanish government and a Spanish Royal Order requiring all Spanish authorities to provide him with assistance during *Rurik*'s voyage, because of Spanish-Russian tensions in the area he had good reason to be concerned about his reception in San Francisco. The Spanish nevertheless greeted the Russians with courtesy. Chamisso (who acted as *Rurik*'s interpreter and translator) and *Rurik*'s second in command, Lt. Shishmarev, were cordially met by the acting commandant of the Presidio, Luis Antonio Argüello²⁸ (one of the sons of Jose Argüello, the commandant during the 1806 visit of the Russian ship *Juno*). Fruits and vegetables were sent to *Rurik*, together with offers of



Louis Choriz lithograph, 1822. The first published illustration of the California grizzly bear. This small bear was captured by Spanish soldiers for a bull/bear fight staged for the *Rurik*'s crew. Choriz painted the bear while it was tethered on the day prior to the fight.

Both Chamisso, *Rurik*'s naturalist, and Choriz wrote with disapproval of the cruelty of the fight. (The bear defeated the bull.)

Courtesy of the author.

assistance from the commandant and from, as Chamisso put it, "the wealthier mission."

The next evening, Capt. Kotzebue and Commandant Argüello met at the Presidio, where the captain was respectfully received. The first order of business, however, was the captain's stubborn insistence that the Presidio provide the two missing gun salutes due to *Rurik* and her flag. According to Chamisso,²⁹ long negotiations ensued until Argüello finally capitulated. Formalities thus satisfied, the parties were free to move on to more pleasant pursuits. The Russians were also able to provide assistance when they learned that the rope, or halyard, used to raise the

flag on the Presidio flagpole had broken when last used and the Spanish had no one who was able to climb the flagpole. A sailor from *Rurik* was promptly dispatched to remedy the situation and the Spanish flag flew once again.

During *Rurik*'s San Francisco sojourn, dinners between the two groups were held regularly, either at the Presidio or in a large tent which the *Rurik* crew had pitched at their shoreside base, which also included a "Russian bath." The Russians usually acted as hosts due to the Presidio's meager resources. The commandant and officers of the Presidio took these opportunities to complain grievously about their lack of

support, not only from Mexico, but from the San Francisco Mission. As recounted by Chamisso:

The wretchedness in which they had been languishing for the past six or seven years, forgotten and abandoned by Mexico the motherland, prevented them from offering us their own hospitality. And the need to pour out their hearts drove them to us also, for we were a jolly and easy-going company. They spoke only with bitterness about the missionaries, who despite lack of outside supplies enjoyed an abundance of products from the land and yet, since the time had run out, would supply them, the Spanish soldiers, only on credit, and even then only with what was absolutely essential, and this did not include bread and flour.³⁰

The Russians were much impressed, however, by the Spanish soldiers' displays of horsemanship, which, they agreed, was equal to the skills of Russian Cossacks. Chamisso was less impressed by the Spaniards' entertainment of "bear-baiting," in which a bear and a wild bull (all Spanish cattle ran wild) were tethered and made to fight to the death; he wrote that, "One must pity the poor creatures that are so shamefully treated." Kotzebue, on the other hand, called the spectacle "remarkable." (Despite being repeatedly tossed by the bull's horns, the small bear won the contest arranged for the Russians' benefit.) According to Kotzebue, bears were so numerous near San Francisco that soldiers would be sent to lasso a bear, at which they were remarkably adept (catching the feet first), "as we would order a cook to bring back a goose from the pen."



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. *Habitants de Californie*. One of the group portraits by Choris, depicting the various tribes at the Mission. Courtesy of the author.

THE VISITORS' OBSERVATIONS OF THE INDIANS AND A VISIT TO MISSION DOLORES

The purpose of this article is to focus on the observations of the *Rurik's* authors, as recorded in their exceptional memoirs and reports. It may be useful background information, however, to summarize the undisputed changes in the structure of the Bay Area Indian tribes during the early years of Spanish colonization. As summarized by Randall Milliken in his book, *A Time of Little Choice*:

In 1770 the political landscape of the San Francisco Bay region was a mosaic of tiny tribal territories, each some eight to twelve

miles in diameter, each containing a population of some two hundred to four hundred individuals. By the year 1810, only forty years later, the tribal territories in all but the most northerly reaches of the San Francisco Bay Region were empty.”³¹

The originally expressed Spanish intent was to operate the various missions for ten years, after which the land would be transferred to the Indians. For various reasons, of course, this never came to pass.

On October 4, the Feast of Saint Francis, the Russians were invited to the Mission, traveling there by horseback. As described by the captain, they observed Indians³² being baptized and heard a concert by an “orchestra” consisting of “a cello,



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. Danse des habitants de Californie à la mission de San Francisco.

Choris's depiction of native dance at the San Francisco mission may be the best known of his images. Choris reported that both the men and women would dance, although separately, and that the different tribes had distinct dances and chants. Much of this native culture was soon lost as the Indians were kept at the Mission with less time and need for tribal identity. Courtesy of the author.



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. Headdresses worn by Indians at ceremonial dances. The visitors from Rurik observed native dances at the mission when they visited during a holiday. Choris took care to depict the clothing, facial markings, and features of the Indians, also distinguishing among the various tribes. Courtesy of the author.

violin and two flutes; these instruments were played by little half-naked Indian children and created a great din." The visitors were then guests at a dinner "where there was no lack of food and wine, the latter produced by the missionaries themselves." After eating, they were shown the Indians living quarters. The captain stated, with obvious disapproval, that, "The filthiness of these barracks was undescribable (sic) and may account for the high mortality rate here." (The same unsanitary conditions had been observed by Vancouver fourteen years earlier. But in their tribal culture, according to Bancroft, the Indians would simply move their village when too much trash accumulated—a reasonable solution it would seem.)

Capt. Kotzebue went on to explain that, "Both sexes must work hard." The men cultivated the fields (not a usual task for Indian men, who saw themselves as hunters), while the women spun wool and wove a coarse cloth. According to Kotzebue, some of the harvest was provided to the soldiers, with only as much given the Indians as required "for their subsistence." (Choris disagrees with Kotzebue, saying the Indians were provided abundant food.) Indians were, however, provided small pieces of land which they could cultivate on their own time.

The day being a holiday, the Indians were not working. Some participated in a popular gambling game, throwing sticks on the ground and betting on odd or even. Others took part in tribal dances,

“with their faces daubed in the most frightful manner.” Men and women both participated, although separately, with dances varying according to tribe. The game and dancing were each the subject of oft-reproduced paintings by Choris. In several “group portraits” of the Indians, he showed each person as an individual, taking care to illustrate dress and features, including facial tattoos or other markings—even the headdresses worn during dancing. He carefully identified on his paintings the tribe, or band, which each Indian represented. In his later book on the voyage, he even went on to list, as did Chamisso, which groups of Indians were most numerous at the mission and which spoke the same language.³³ Choris’ paintings are therefore much more than generic illustrations of native life; he was painting for posterity.

Choris even attempted to record the Indians’ chant in musical notation, the first printed record of music in early California:



How successful Choris was in this attempt no one can tell (Chamisso was skeptical), but his effort demonstrates a remarkable dedication to preserving the Indians’ culture. Professor August Mahr, in his book on the *Rurik’s* visit to San Francisco, opines that, in some ways, “Choris betrays a keener interest in ethnology” than Chamisso.³⁴ Choris, however, unlike Kotzebue and Chamisso, was largely uncritical of the methods employed by the mission system as a whole.

As described by the Russians, Indians entered the missions voluntarily, where they were provided food and clothing and were free to come and go. However, those who were converted and baptized (becoming “Neophytes”) “belong to the church. . . . The church has an inalienable right to her children, and exercises this right with rigor.” As succinctly expressed by Millikan in *A Time of Little Choice*, “The decision to reject a mission life could be made a thousand times, but

the decision to join a mission community could be made only once.”³⁵ Twice a year, the Indians were usually permitted to return to their families for a few weeks. Some did not return, but others brought in new, potential converts. Those who fail to return, Chamisso states:

become the bitterest enemies of the Spaniards [whom] the missionaries endeavor, on their excursions, to regain by gentle means; and if they do not succeed, they have recourse to armed force. Hence many of the hostile events between the Spaniards and Indians.³⁶

While both Chamisso and Choris took care to identify by name and language about fifteen separate Indian tribes (or bands), Chamisso wrote that none of the missionaries “seems to have had any concern for the Indians’ history, customs, beliefs or languages.” The Indians did not understand the Latin of the mass they were required to attend or the sermons conducted in Spanish. As a result, Capt. Kotzebue observed, “It is incomprehensible to me how the natives have been taught the Christian religion at all.”

Chamisso and Kotzebue both expressed dismay in their writings that Indians in the California missions were dying in tragic numbers—mostly the result, as we now know, of lack of immunity against common European diseases.³⁷ As reported by Chamisso:

The Indians die in the missions, in an alarming and increasing proportion. San Francisco [mission] contains about a thousand Indians: the number of deaths, in the last year [1815], exceeded three hundred; it amounts already this year (till October) to two hundred and seventy, of which forty occurred during the last month. . . . The converted people [in some of the older missions] may be considered as nearly extinct.³⁸

In an effort to mitigate the alarming Indian mortality, the San Francisco Mission established during the following year, 1817, a “rancho” in the more salubrious climate of present-day Marin



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822 showing Indians playing native gambling game at the Mission. Sticks were thrown into the air and the participants would bet on how they would fall. A referee presided. Choris reports that the Indians had to be prohibited from wagering their clothing. Reportedly, a similar Indian game was still being played in recent years. Courtesy of the author.

County, to serve as a sanitarium for ailing Indians. Originally, 240 Indians were transferred to the colony with good results. By the end of 1820, the number had increased to 590 and the settlement soon became self-sustaining. Named San Rafael Arcangel (in honor of the "healing saint"), it is commonly known as the San Rafael Mission, although technical mission status was never conferred upon it.³⁹ Historians justifiably contend, however, that both the San Rafael and the Sonoma Mission (the twenty-first and final California mission, established in 1823, and the only mission opened during Mexican rule) were also established as buffers against Russian territorial expansion in Northern California.

Chamisso and Kotzebue's opinions regarding the work of the missions were summarized by Chamisso (who, himself, was a Catholic), as follows:

Overall, the contempt which the missionaries have for the people, to whom they are sent, seems to us, considering their pious occupation, a very unfortunate circumstance. None of them appear to have troubled themselves about their history, customs, religions, or languages: "They are irrational savages, and nothing more can be said of them. Who would trouble himself with their stupidity? Who would spend his time upon it?"⁴⁰

In fairness, it should be noted that Chamisso was evenhanded in his criticism, equally condemning the Russian treatment of native people in Alaska.

While thus very critical of the condescending attitude of the missionaries toward their Indian charges, Chamisso also reported occasions in which the Indians were permitted and encouraged to participate in diversions from their usual routine, even including a "field trip" to the *Rurik*:

The fathers sent the Indians in their boat to our anchoring-place, merely that they might look at our ship, which was a new object to them. The Indian, in the mission, dances his national dances, on Sunday, in presence of the fathers, and plays, always for gain, his usual game of chance; he is only forbidden to stake his coat, a piece of coarse, woolen cloth, manufactured in the mission; he can also enjoy the hot-bath, to which he has been accustomed. The dances are boisterous, different in each tribe, and the tune generally without words. The game is played between two antagonists, at "odd or even," with short sticks; an umpire keeps the account with other sticks. The usual bath of the Indian, like that of most of the northern nations, is as follows: at the entrance of a cave at the sea-shore, in which the bathers are, a great fire is made; they suffer it to go out, when they have perspired sufficiently, and then leap over it, and plunge into the sea.⁴¹

Chamisso did agree with the Spanish that, with the exception of one tribe, which he called the Tcholvonians (now identified by Professor James J. Rawls as the Northern Yakuts,⁴² or Chukchansi—see Choris's lithograph of two Indians with bow and arrow), the Indians of the Bay Area "are far below those on the north coast, and the interior of America."⁴³ However, those familiar with pre-mission descriptions of Indians on San Francisco Bay, particularly the journals of "first encounters," cannot help but be struck by the disparity between those descriptions and the descriptions and opinions expressed by the visitors from the *Rurik*.

The major chroniclers of these first contacts between Europeans and Indians on the very shores of the Bay are Fr. Juan Crespi (Crespi/Fages expedition, on foot from Monterey, 1772)⁴⁴ and Fr. Vincente Santa Maria (Ayala expedition on the *San Carlos*, the first vessel to enter the Bay, 1775).⁴⁵ Although the two parties came into contact with Indians at different locations on San Francisco Bay, each account is nearly identical in describing them as social, curious, communicative, generous with food and gifts, and remarkably intelligent. Fr. Santa Maria marveled at how easily the Indians learned Spanish and even remembered, from one meeting to another, the names of individuals. "It was astonishing with what facility they pronounced the Spanish."⁴⁶ These were not the Indians described by Chamisso.

It has been said that Chamisso sailed to the New World embracing the idealized concept of the "noble savage." While these specific beliefs may be doubted,⁴⁷ there is no question that Chamisso left with high expectations of native peoples. Those expectations were largely met in the *Rurik*'s later travels in the South Seas, but not in California. Chamisso could not have known that he came to San Francisco forty years too late.

DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERS

Soon after *Rurik*'s arrival, the recently appointed Spanish governor at Monterey, Don Paulo Vincente de Sola, sent to Capt. Kotzebue a "very polite letter" expressing his support and promising to come to San Francisco to meet personally. The governor came to the Presidio as promised on October 18. Two Presidio artillerymen were injured during the cannon salutes announcing the governor's arrival, and the *Rurik*'s doctor, Eschscholtz, was called upon to provide emergency medical aid. Chamisso wrote that the Spanish had no medical personnel at either the Presidio or the Mission and that about the only treatment given for illness was blood-letting, which Chamisso correctly opined did more harm than good.



Lith. par J. Langlumie d'après Choris

Lith. de Langlumie & de l'Albâtre. N°2.

Tcholoronnis a la chasse dans la baie de St. Francisco.

Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. Tcholoronnis Hunting by San Francisco Bay. Now identified as the Northern Yakuts, this tribe cooperated with the Spanish but maintained its independence. Apparently, none of them joined the mission. This is the only tribe praised by name by the Rurik visitors for their expert craftsmanship in making weapons, particularly bows and arrows "of extraordinary elegance." The Indian-made objects shown by Choris in a separate lithograph are probably all made by this tribe. Courtesy of the author.

Capt. Kotzebue's stubbornness asserted itself again and, in a breach of protocol to the higher ranking Sola, Kotzebue remained on board *Rurik* while the Governor, in his full dress uniform, waited for him at the Presidio. The captain assigned to Chamisso the awkward task of informing Sola that he was expected on board ship. The scene, as described by Chamisso, could be from a Charlie Chaplin movie:

I found the little man in full dress uniform, bedecked with medals and ribbons, except

for a sleeping cap that he was still wearing on his head, ready to be snatched off at a moment's notice. I carried out my mission as best I could and saw the old man's face drop to three times its normal length. He bit his lip and said that, unfortunately, he had no stomach for the sea before eating and that he was sorry in the meantime to have to forego the pleasure of meeting the captain."⁴⁸



Adelbert von Chamisso, 1831.
Courtesy of Google images.

Sola was about to give up and return to Monterey when Chamisso, always the reasonable one, mediated the impasse by arranging that Sola and Kotzebue meet at the beach when the captain came to *Rurik's* tent to adjust the ship's chronometers. The two men approached each other and, as so colorfully expressed by Chamisso, "Spain and Russia, each going halfway, fell into one another's open arms." All hard feelings passed and that evening, at a "feast" at the Presidio, obviously supplied by the Mission, the parties toasted the friendship of their respective nations "to salvos of artillery." (Apparently the Presidio's artillerymen had sufficiently recovered.)

On the following day, *Rurik* hosted a dinner and in the evening there was a dance at the Presidio, newly renovated with adobe and a tile roof. On this occasion, Chamisso noted that Capt. Kotzebue was "ingratiating and charming," which he could clearly be when he wanted to,

even winning over the previously reluctant Governor Sola. The next day, October 18, Ivan Koskov, the Russian Commandant at Fort Ross, arrived in a "scow" with abundant supplies for *Rurik*, as requested by Capt. Kotzebue.

A few days later, on October 26, Kuskov returned for a "diplomatic conference" with Governor Sola, Commandant Argüello, captain Kotzebue, and Chamisso. Sola reiterated his demands of the past years that the Russians order an evacuation of Fort Ross. Surprisingly, the Russians did not disagree that the settlement was unauthorized, and Kuskov (the founder of both the Bodega Bay and Fort Ross settlements) said he would be only too willing to close Fort Ross if so ordered by his superior, Alexander Baranov, the head of the Russian-American Company in Sitka. The Russians were being disingenuous, however. Baranov, an autocrat who was largely responsible for Russian development on the California coast, was about as likely to order the abandonment of Fort Ross as he was to start growing bananas. After all, the settlement had been built as a fort to defend against attack, and not from the local Kashia (or Kashaya) band of Pomo Indians, with whom the Russians had excellent relations. The Kashia had even been employed to help construct the fort. Fort Ross had been built to resist a Spanish attack—which had never come and never would.

The parties eventually agreed to sign a joint statement, or "protocol" (negotiated and drafted in part by Chamisso—the "memorable events of my diplomatic career," as he wrote), to be delivered to their respective sovereigns. The statement expressed the Spanish complaints and demands regarding the Fort Ross. In exchange, Sola promised to undertake no violent measures against the Russian settlement, which, as Chamisso observed, would have been very unlikely in any event. The agreement thus amounted to little more than a capitulation by the Spanish, who had no reason to expect that any heed would be paid to their complaints. This, of course, is exactly what occurred. According to Chamisso's later accounts, the protocol was never presented to Czar Alexander, but was merely filed away with "the

proper ministerial department." Indeed, no mention of the conference or protocol was made in Capt. Kotzebue's official report on the voyage and it is only through Chamisso's more candid, unofficial "*Diary*" that we learn of them.⁴⁹

The *Rurik*'s brief excursion into diplomatic waters thus came to an inconclusive end, as the Russians no doubt intended; nevertheless, the meeting contributed to the vessel's continued friendly reception at San Francisco. Following *Rurik*'s visit, Governor Sola moderated his harsh position on foreign trade, which had been a Russian goal since Rezanov's visit in 1806. During the few remaining years of Spanish rule, until Mexican rule commenced in 1822, mutually beneficial commerce was conducted at California ports, although still formally restricted under Spanish law.⁵⁰

The Russians hosted a farewell dinner under their tent on Sunday, October 26, with ample toasts to their respective monarchs, nations, the governor, and so on. The wine, apparently, was running freely. As was observed in Chamisso's diary, "A good missionary dipped his mantle too deep in the juice of the grape, and reeled visibly under the burden." On October 30, *Rurik* took on board fresh water, livestock, and vegetables "in the greatest abundance," in addition to a cask of wine—the personal gift of Governor Sola. The captain wrote that, on the following day, "our friends from the Presidio dined with us at noon on the *Rurik*." Some of the crew rode to the mission to pay their final respects.

On the morning of Nov. 1, 1816, All Saints Day, *Rurik* weighed anchor at nine a.m. as the fog dissipated. "Singularly beautiful was the spectacle displayed for us at our departure," gushed Chamisso, "when the mist would sometimes hide and sometimes unveil the different peaks and valleys of the coast."⁵¹ The waters of the Bay itself were caused to shine by phosphorescent marine organisms. *Rurik*, however, departed the Bay without notice while the Spaniards were at services—"very rapidly and suddenly" as reported to Gov. Sola by the obviously surprised Argüello.⁵² Nevertheless, on this occasion those at the Presidio did not hesitate to provide a seven-gun salute.

RURIK AND HER MEN AFTER SAN FRANCISCO

Upon leaving San Francisco, *Rurik* spent four months in Hawaii (then the Sandwich Islands), where Choris continued to complete historic paintings, including the only existing portrait of King Kamahamaha I, in flowing robes, painted shortly before the king's death. This iconic portrait is now displayed at the prestigious Honolulu Academy of Arts. Choris wanted the captain to leave him in Hawaii until *Rurik* returned the following year, but the suggestion was not approved. After visiting other Pacific islands, *Rurik* returned to Alaska and the Bering Sea during the spring and summer of 1817. In July, because of increased ice flows and the captain's ill health, Capt. Kotzebue abandoned the search for a Northwest Passage—a decision which Chamisso later severely criticized, arguing that the second officer should have been permitted to continue the mission. *Rurik* returned briefly to Hawaii in the fall of 1817 before completing her voyage with stops at Guam, Manila, Cape Town, Portsmouth, England, and Copenhagen.

Long after having been given up as lost (*Rurik* had left Europe with only two years' provisions and had no way to send mail home after leaving San Francisco), *Rurik* returned to Kronstadt on July 31, 1818. She had completed her circumnavigation of the globe in three years and one day. Four days later, *Rurik* anchored in the Neva River, near St. Petersburg, in front of the castle of her sponsor, Count Rumyantsev.

Less than a year after Capt. Kotzebue's return, his father, the acclaimed German author and playwright, was stabbed to death in his home by a fanatical theology student—a tragedy which the German government seized upon as justification for imposing the *Carlsbad Decrees*—harsh restrictions on freedom of speech and press. Kotzebue continued work on an account of the voyage and, from 1821 to 1823, published a three-volume narrative, the third volume consisting of Chamisso's contribution. His health restored, his naval career continued, and commencing in 1823, he commanded a much larger vessel, *Predpriatie*, on a

three-year voyage to South and North America and the South Seas. On September 27, 1824, with California then under Mexican rule, he anchored his ship once again in the harbor of San Francisco. (This was the notorious episode in San Francisco history in which the Presidio had to obtain gunpowder from the arriving ship in order to return a proper salute.)

Joined on this voyage by his best friend from the *Rurik*, Dr. Eschscholtz, Capt. Kotzebue spent two months anchored in the San Francisco Bay while traveling to the missions at Santa Clara and San Jose and exploring present-day Marin and Sonoma Counties, including visits to Fort Ross and the more recently established missions at San Rafael and Sonoma. Kotzebue retired from naval service in 1829 to write a detailed account of his second voyage. He died in 1846. A city, Kotzebue (the home of the 2011 Iditarod winner), and Kotzebue Sound in Alaska, are named after him.

Rurik's naturalist, Adelbert von Chamisso, returned to Berlin, where he received many honors, including election to the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences and appointments as curator of the Royal Botanical Gardens and director of the Royal Herbarium. Multi-volume editions of his works appeared between 1831 and 1836. Chamisso's book on Pacific travel, published in 1836, became a bestseller of its day. His social and political writings, romance ballads, and poetry were all successful. His linguistic skills led him to publish the first grammar of the Hawaiian language, based on his studies during the *Rurik* voyage. He married the daughter of a friend and continued literary and scientific writing until his untimely death from illness in 1838, at the age of 57. In 1840, two years after Chamisso's death, a lyrical cycle of his love poems was set to music by Robert Schumann. (Grieg likewise favored his work with a musical composition.) A performance of the Schumann/Chamisso musical and vocal piece was recorded in September 2010, and may be seen and heard on the Internet today.

A feud developed in the writings of Chamisso and Kotzebue, who had never really gotten along on a personal basis, each accusing the other of improprieties during *Rurik's* voyage. Chamisso, in

particular, criticized Kotzebue for too easily abandoning the search for a Northwest Passage. Chamisso got the last word when his *Diary* was published in 1836.⁵³ In Munich, an annual literature prize is awarded in Chamisso's name. An island, appropriately located in Kotzebue Sound, Alaska, and an Alaskan Wilderness Area, designated by Congress in 1975, are named for him. The National Park Service at the Presidio of San Francisco maintains, to this day, a website honoring his work.⁵⁴

THE CHORIS LITHOGRAPHS

Louis Choris first attempted to duplicate his *Rurik* paintings as engraved plates for Kotzebue's official report on the *Rurik's* voyage, but was unsatisfied with the results. After going to Paris for further study in 1819, however, he found his medium: lithography, a new process invented in 1796. Choris made arrangements with the one of the best lithographers in Paris to make reproductions of his drawings and paintings. In simple terms, lithographs were made by drawing or painting an image in wax or other oily substance directly upon a flat stone. After etching with acid, the stone was washed with water and used to transfer ink to paper. In most cases, lithographic reproductions were copied from the original image by artists employed by the lithographer. Once again not being completely satisfied with these efforts, Choris learned the process himself and personally drew many, if not most, of his images directly on the lithographic stone, thus participating in the total process.

In 1822, Choris published in Paris a book of the *Rurik* lithographs, including a chapter with his San Francisco narrative.⁵⁵ The volume contains a total of 104 plates of native life, culture, and natural history, with twelve plates in the San Francisco chapter. The remainder of the book contains equally noteworthy depictions of the Hawaiian Islands (including the famous Kamehameha portrait), Chile, Alaska, the Philippine Islands, and Easter Island.

In a 2005 auction description of Choris's book,⁵⁶ historian W. Michael Mathes states:



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. Habitants de Californie. Courtesy of the author.

Choris employed the newly developed process of etching on stone, lithography, to produce some of the most extraordinary plates to appear in relation to a scientific voyage. Noted for their accuracy and lack of romanticism or other exaggerations, these plates illustrate observations made during the voyage . . . and are considered fundamental to ethnographic, botanical, and zoological descriptions of these areas.

Professor Mathes further explains:

In the present work, about ninety of the lithographs were drawn by Choris directly on the lithographic stone, resulting in spectacular lithography imparting a real immediacy and connection to Choris's original artwork.

The Choris lithographs are thus unusual, and considered by many to have greater authenticity, to the extent that they more nearly represent the work of the original artist.⁵⁷ Chromolithography, or color printing, was not invented until 1837, so Choris's lithographs had to be individually hand colored. (Because of the expense, many of the books were sold with uncolored images.) A bibliographer has called Choris's publication one of the most beautiful books of travel in existence.

Choris's San Francisco lithographs are duplicated in countless books about early California and Native American history. Unique in the annals of San Francisco history, nine of the Choris lithographs depict, with obvious respect and great detail, the appearance, dress, and customs of the Native Americans encountered by Choris



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. California Sea Lion. Fortunately for the sea lion, it did not have a desirable pelt like the sea otter, which was hunted by the Russians and others to near extinction. Courtesy of the author.

at the Presidio and Mission, including one illustration of a bow, fox skin quiver and four woven baskets. Capt. Kotzebue endorsed the accuracy of his depictions, stating, "How the Indians dress here can be clearly seen here from Mr. Choris's illustrations." Two other lithographs are also historic in portraying a sea lion (probably the first such depiction in California) and the first published image of the California grizzly bear. The grizzly bear lithograph was modeled by Choris after the unfortunate bear which was captured for the fight with a bull, staged for *Rurik* visitors—little wonder its downtrodden appearance. Another drawing depicts, as a navigational aid, an elevation of the entrance to San Francisco

Bay, the Farallon Islands, and Point Reyes.

A leading work on early California lithographs describes the Choris lithographs of San Francisco as "monumental" and "beautifully colored."⁵⁸ Professor Edward Mornin, in his recent book on *Rurik's* San Francisco visit, particularly praised Choris's success in achieving realistic portrayals of Native Americans:

That Choris nevertheless achieved splendid depictions of the Indians, and not only of groups, but of individuals, is to be ascribed to his mastery of the realistic portrait style. He neither romanticizes nor heroizes (sic) them; nor do his portrayals tend to classical norms, as is observable in the work of some of his predecessors.⁵⁹

Choris could not resist when another opportunity



Louis Choris lithograph, 1822. Arms and Utensils of California. Choris reported a great disparity in the quality of crafts made by the Indians. The items shown in this illustration are among those he most admired, probably made by the tribe now identified as the Northern Yakuts. Courtesy of the author.

arose to portray the New World. During his second visit to America, he was attacked and killed by bandits while riding near Vera Cruz, Mexico, on March 22, 1828, his thirty-third birthday. Banditry was endemic to that area and it can only be assumed that Choris knew he was risking his life by traveling then, as indeed he had on many earlier occasions during *Rurik's* voyage.

The contributions of Louis Choris to our understanding of the native peoples and times of the early nineteenth century are irreplaceable, not only in San Francisco, but in Hawaii and the South Seas, in Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, and in all the varied locales which became subjects of his study and talent. In the years before photography, representational artists such as Choris provided the only means by which distant

travelers could capture an image and bring it home. This was how the American West first became widely understood, spurring further exploration and settlement. A very few have felt the need to criticize fine points of artistic merit in Choris's work, but they are missing the point. It was not Choris's purpose to create fine art. His responsibility was to convey knowledge, and this he did admirably and with great skill. Choris's attention to detail and the extraordinary care he took to ensure the quality of his published lithographs are particularly praiseworthy. The continued appreciation, use, and study of his work—not only in California but throughout the world—constitute his true legacy.

PORT SAN-FRANCISCO

ET SES HABITANTS.

(*Lat. nord, 37°48' 21"; long. ouest, 121° 28' 15".*)

LE 20 septembre 1816, vieux style (2 octobre), nous eûmes de bonne heure connaissance de la côte de la Nouvelle-Californie. C'était la Punta-de-los-Reyes au nord du Puerto-San-Francisco. Comme le vent nous était très-favorable, nous eûmes bientôt passé les Farellones, écueils dangereux, et à quatre heures après midi, nous entrâmes dans le port San-Francisco. Le port, placé en dedans et sur la côte méridionale de l'entrée, est muni de tout ce qui est nécessaire pour la défendre avec avantage.

Le Presidio de San-Francisco est à-peu-près à un mille marin de distance du fort et du même côté; sa forme est carrée; il a deux portes toujours occupées par une garde assez nombreuse; les fenêtres ne sont ouvertes que sur la cour; il est habité par quatre-vingt-dix soldats espagnols, un commandant, un lieutenant, un commissaire et un sergent. La plupart sont mariés. Les hommes et les femmes sont grands et bien bâtis; très-peu de soldats ont épousé des Indiennes.

Tous ces soldats sont bons cavaliers; deux peuvent aisément tenir en respect cinquante Indiens.

First page of the San Francisco chapter of Louis Choris's book, published in Paris in 1822. This travel book of Rurik's voyage around the world was subscribed to by sovereigns and nobility.

It contains all of Choris's lithographs shown in this article.

Courtesy of the author.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Gary Sterling ("Gary") is a maritime lawyer and a founder of the San Francisco maritime law firm of Sterling & Clack, to which he is presently "of counsel." He is an avid collector of books, ephemera and other materials relating to San Francisco. For many years, he was able to combine his legal and historical interests by serving as counsel for San Francisco's World War II Liberty Ship, SS Jeremiah O'Brien. Gary's particular interest in San Francisco's maritime history led him to write the present article about the 1816 visit of the *Rurik*, which he researched from books and materials in his collection. He wishes to thank Kallan Sterling for photographing the original Choris lithographs reproduced in this article. He may be reached at paulgarysterling@yahoo.com.

NOTES

1. Approximately ninety soldiers were assigned to the Presidio, but at any one time many would be absent, assigned to missions or on other detached duty.
2. Mission San Francisco de Assis (St. Francis of Assisi) was commonly called Mission Dolores because of its location at its founding on the elusive Laguna Dolores, soon to be erased from local memory. Both the Presidio and Mission were founded in 1776 forty years before *Rurik's* visit.
3. Prior to *Rurik's* voyage, the best known non-Spanish vessels to have entered San Francisco Bay were George Vancouver's *HMS Discovery* in April 1792 and again in 1793 and the Russian ship *Juno* on the "Rezanov Voyage," in April 1806 ten years before *Rurik*. It has erroneously been stated that *Discovery* and *Juno* were the only non-Spanish vessels to have preceded *Rurik* to San Francisco. Although the visit of any vessel, even a Spanish vessel, was unusual, Bancroft, in his monumental, seven-volume *History of California* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), vol. II, chronicles voyages to San Francisco from 1792 to 1816 by at least eleven vessels from England, the United States, Russia, and Peru.
4. Fort San Joaquin was the predecessor of Fort Point, constructed by the Spanish in 1794.
5. The first-hand accounts of *Rurik's* San Francisco visit, originally published in German and French, have all been translated into English, most recently by Professor Edward Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes, The Visit of the Russian Ship Rurik to San Francisco in 1816 and the Men behind the Visit* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2002). See also, August C. Mahr, *The Visit of the "Rurik" to San Francisco in 1816* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932); Adelbert von Chamisso (Henry Kratz, ed.), *A Voyage Around the World with the Romanzov Exploring Expedition in the Years 1815-1818 in the Brig Rurik* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986); Adelbert von Chamisso (Oscar Lewis, preface), *A Sojourn at San Francisco Bay 1816 by Adelbert von Chamisso, Scientist of the Russian Exploring Ship Rurik, Illustrated by a Series of Drawings, First Published in 1822 by Rurik's Artist Louis Choris* (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1936); Louis Choris (first translation from French, by Porter Garnett), *San Francisco One Hundred Years Ago* (San Francisco: A.M. Robertson, 1913).
6. Charles A. Fracchia, *Fire & Gold, The San Francisco Story* (Encinitas, California: Heritage Media Corporation, 1996), pp. 17-21. The only comparable early images of Native Americans in Northern California were made at Mission San Jose during the Rezanov Expedition in 1806.

7. "Eshscholtz and von Chamisso Spend a Month at the Bay of San Francisco," *Fremontia* 26:3 (July 1998, originally published by Harvard University, 1956).
8. There is little agreement upon the English spelling of the count's surname, which appears variously as Rumiantsev, Rumjanoff, Rumiantzof, Rumanzoff, Romanzoff, Romanzov, Rumanzov, and more. "Rumyantsev" is arbitrarily chosen here as the form used by the Encyclopedia Britannica.
9. "Eshscholtz and Von Chamisso Spend a Month at the Bay of San Francisco," *Fremontia* 26:3 (July 1998).
10. The first published illustration of what is now San Francisco is a drawing of the Presidio, as seen from the water, with Indians in one of their tule (reed) canoes in the foreground, attributed to the surgeon/naturalist on that voyage, Georg Heinrich F. von Langsdorff. See John Phillip Langellier and Daniel B. Rosen, *El Presidio de San Francisco, A History under Spain and Mexico 1776–1846* (Spokane: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1996), p. 119. A more sophisticated rendition of Indians in a tule canoe is included in the Choris lithographs.
11. The romance between Nicolai Rezanov and Concepción Argüello has been memorialized in a novel by Gertrude Atherton (surprisingly accurate) and a poem by Bret Harte (less accurate, though moving), as well as in scores of other accounts. In an exhaustive work of scholarship, Eve Iversen sets the record straight in *The Romance of Nikolai Rezanov and Concepción Argüello* (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1998).
12. August C. Mahr, *The Visit of the "Rurik" to San Francisco in 1816* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932).
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 21–27.
14. Edward Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes, The Visit of the Russian Ship Rurik to San Francisco in 1816 and the Men behind the Visit* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2002).
15. Adelbert von Chamisso (Henry Kratz, ed.), *A Voyage Around the World with the Romanzov Exploring Expedition in the Years 1815–1818 in the Brig Rurik* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986).
16. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
17. Fort Ross (from *Rossiya* or *Ros*, meaning "Russian,") was often called "Port Bodega" by the Russians, including *Rurik's* writers—leading to no end of confusion. Nowhere in any of the *Rurik* narratives is the term "Fort Ross" used. In the "protocol" signed by the Spanish and the Russians from *Rurik*, Fort Ross is enigmatically described only as the permanent post of Kuskov, "eight miles north of the harbor of Bodega." Mahr, *The Visit of the "Rurik,"* p. 119. See also Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes*, p. 96 and Erwin G. Gudde, *California Place Names, The Origin and Etymology of Current Geographical Names* 3rd ed., rev. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 33, 113.
18. Poaching of sea otters was rampant, and not only by the Russians. According to Choris, two hundred and fifty American vessels sailed annually from Boston and New York to hunt and trade along the West Coast of North America (probably an exaggeration), with little fear of Spanish intervention. Even when Spanish vessels were present, the American vessels were faster and better armed. Choris says that during *Rurik's* visit, Russians were hunting sea lions in San Francisco Bay itself, with the knowledge of Capt. Kotzebue.
19. captain Kotzebue was, however, surprised to learn that several Russians were being held prisoner by the Spanish in Monterey, having either deserted from Russian vessels or been captured on shore. Four Russian prisoners were later released to the captain and taken on board *Rurik*. One of them, an older man, soon died from injuries sustained when a powder horn exploded. Some deserters from American vessels had also been captured by the Russians.
20. The first Russian circumnavigation of the world was accomplished by the Krusenstern Expedition, 1803–1806, on the vessel *Nadezhda*, likewise sponsored by Count Rumyantsev. Adam Johann von Krusenstern, the captain of the ship, was accompanied on this voyage by Nicolai Rezanov—with considerable animosity between the two over who was in charge of the expedition. Rezanov left in Alaska to become captain of the vessel *Juno* for his historic 1806 visit to San Francisco. Krusenstern, a close confidant of Count Rumyantsev, later personally supervised the building of *Rurik*.
21. *Peter Schlemiehl's Remarkable Story or Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*, sometimes translated as *Wonderful History* (Nurnberg: 1814).
22. The most thorough account of the work of Chamisso and Eschscholtz as naturalists in San Francisco may be found in Richard C. Beidleman, *California's Frontier Naturalists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 48–55. Professor Edward Mornin, author of *Through Alien Eyes*, has also published an article focusing on Chamisso's naturalist role during the *Rurik's* San Francisco visit, "Adelbert von Chamisso: A German Poet-Naturalist and His Visit to California," *California History* vol. LXXVIII, no. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 2–13. For the original scientific descriptions of the botanical, mineral, and other specimens collected in San Francisco by Chamisso and Eschscholtz, see Mahr, *The Visit of the "Rurik" to San Francisco in 1816*, pp. 125–185. In addition to the California Poppy, Chamisso's descriptions include, by way of example, the California Blackberry, California Wild Rose, Yerba Buena herb, Western Dog Violet, Honeysuckle, Forget-me-not, Seaside Daisy, Goldenrod, California Sagebrush, California Hazel; two species of butterflies by Eschscholtz (the Monarch and the Common Checkerspot, a new species); and, of course, the California Grizzly Bear. Chamisso even named a new California plant species for *Rurik's* sponsor, Count Rumyantsev.

23. Cameron Rogers, Trodden Glory, *The Story of the California Poppy with a Description of Some Russians* (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1949), pp. 2–3.
24. Ibid, pp. 15–20.
25. Thomas C. Blackburn, “A ‘New’ Choris Watercolor,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*, vol. 21:2 (1999), p. 154.
26. Bancroft Library website, “California Cornerstones,” www.oac.cdlib.org.
27. Ibid.
28. Luis Argüello had a long and successful career under difficult circumstances. He served as Commandant of the San Francisco Presidio until 1830, well into the Mexican era. Born in San Francisco, he also served as the first native-born governor of California from 1822–1825, while retaining his position as Presidio commandant. He is buried at Mission Dolores.
29. The missing gun salutes were never mentioned by Captain Kotzebue in his official report; in fact the captain falsely reported that five gun salutes were exchanged without incident. Oscar Lewis, in his notes to the Book Club of California’s book on *Rurik’s* visit, Adelbert von Chamisso, *A Sojourn at San Francisco Bay 1816* (San Francisco: The Grabhorn Press, 1936), p. 16, states that there existed a difference in Russian and Spanish protocol regarding gun salutes. It has, however, also been stated that the captain provoked the incident as a way of testing the Spanish—a conclusion supported, according to Mornin, by the fact that a nearly identical incident had occurred during *Rurik’s* April 1916 visit to Chile. Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes*, p. 87.
30. Translation by Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes*, p. 24.
31. Randall Milliken, *A Time of Little Choice, The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area 1769–1810* (Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press, 1995), p. 1.
32. According to Kotzebue, “los Indios” was the name given by the Spanish to “the savage (or native) tribes.” Mahr, *The Visit of the “Rurik,”* p. 58, unnumbered footnote. Apparently for that reason, the Russians used the same terminology.
33. Mahr, *The Visit of the “Rurik,”* pp. 87–89, 99. Surprisingly, most of the bands of Indians mentioned by Choris and Chamisso appear to have been components of what is now categorized as the Coast Miwok tribe, from the North and East Bay regions, rather than the Ohlone, or Costanoan, tribe, which inhabited the San Francisco peninsula and beyond. The Spanish soldiers also traveled up the Sacramento River to recruit Indians, but met with strong resistance.
34. Mahr, *The Visit of the “Rurik” to San Francisco in 1816*, p. 354, unnumbered footnote.
35. Millikan, *A Time of Little Choice*, p. 11.
36. Ibid, p. 3.
37. Few children born at the missions are said to have reached adulthood. Gastrointestinal diseases were common. Epidemics included syphilis, tuberculosis, and occasionally measles, smallpox, and possibly influenza and typhoid fever. Millikan, *A Time of Little Choice*, pp. 4, 67.
38. Mahr, *The Visit of the “Rurik,”* p. 83.
39. Msgr. Francis J. Weber, ed., *Last of the Missions, A Documentary; History of San Francisco de Solano [Sonoma Mission]* (Hong Kong: Libra Press, n.d. [1982]); Weber, *The Penultimate Mission, A Documentary History of San Rafael, Arcangel* (Hong Kong: Libra Press, 1983). See also, by Weber, *Mission Dolores, A Documentary History of San Francisco Mission* (Hong Kong: Libra Press, 1979).
40. Mahr, *The Visit of the “Rurik,”* p. 83.
41. Ibid, p. 81, fn. 9.
42. James J. Rawls, *Indians of California* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press. 1984), p. 31.
43. Mahr, *The Visit of the “Rurik,”* p. 83.
44. Newer translations of the Crespi Journals may be found in Lowell Bean, *The Ohlone Past and Present, Native Americans of the San Francisco Bay Region* (Menlo Park: Ballena Press, 1994), pp. 1–38. The Portola Expedition, which discovered San Francisco Bay in 1769, had minimal contact with the native population there. Fr. Crespi had been with Portola on that expedition.
45. John Galvin, ed., *The First Spanish Entry into San Francisco Bay 1775*. (San Francisco: John Howell, 1971).
46. Ibid, p. 59.
47. Simply stated, the term *noble savage* represents the concept that uncivilized man exists in a state of morality—sometimes erroneously attributed to Rousseau. Such beliefs would, of course, be in direct conflict with any tenets Chamisso may have retained from his Catholicism, not to mention conflicting with the very basis for founding the missions by the Franciscans.
48. Translation by Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes*, p. 27.

49. Mahr, *The Voyage of the "Rurik,"* p. 24. According to Chamisso, Governor Sola subsequently received a Russian Order of Merit, apparently rewarding him for his reasonable stance in dealing with the Russians. Chamisso proudly reported receiving a sea otter pelt from Kuskov, surely a symbolic gift, which he deposited in a Berlin museum.
50. In 1817, the Russians entered into a treaty with the Kashia Pomo, granting the Russians possession of Fort Ross—admittedly for little more than the California equivalent of twenty-four dollars worth of beads. The Russians kept Fort Ross until long after the supply of sea otters was depleted, finally selling it (the buildings, but not the land) in 1841 to John Sutter for \$30,000. See Robert A. Thompson, *The Russian Settlement in California, Known as Fort Ross, Founded 1812 ... Abandoned 1841. Why the Russians came and why they left* (Santa Rosa: Sonoma Democrat Pub. Co., 1896, reprinted Oakland: Biobooks, 1951); *Fort Ross, A Russian Outpost in California* (San Francisco: California Redwood Association, n.d. [1916]), reprinted from Oakland Tribune; Fort Ross Citizens' Advisory Committee, *Fort Ross, The Russian Settlement in California* (n.p., by Committee, 1974).
51. Mahr, *The Visit of the "Rurik,"* p. 51.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
53. Mahr, *The Voyage of the "Rurik,"* pp. 13–14. Since *Rurik* was not built to operate in heavy ice, however, Kotzebue also has his defenders.
54. NPS Website, *Presidio of San Francisco Adelbert von Chamisso*, www.nps.gov/prsf/historyculture/adelbert-von-chamisso.htm
55. *Voyage Pittoresque Autour du Monde, avec des Portraits de Sauvages d' Amerique, d' Asie, d' Afrique, et des îles du Grand Ocean: des paysages, des vues maritimes, et plusieurs objets d'histoire naturelle* (Paris: Didot, 1822, originally published in sections beginning in 1820). The first English translation from the French of Choris's San Francisco chapter was completed in 1913 by noted San Francisco author, artist, and all-around bohemian, Porter Garnett: Choris, *San Francisco One Hundred Years Ago* (San Francisco: A.M. Robertson, 1913). Choris's narrative of the entire *Rurik* voyage is reportedly located in Paris and has never been translated into English. In 1826, Choris published a second book containing his lithographs from the remainder of *Rurik's* voyage.
56. In 2005, a complete copy of Choris's book was sold at auction by Sloan Galleries in San Francisco. The excellent auction description of the book by historian W. Michael Mathes (Professor of history, University of San Francisco; curator Sutro Library; author, among other credentials), including four illustrations of Choris's San Francisco lithographs, may be seen at www.dsloan.com/Auctions/A15/A15Web40.htm.
57. For example, Choris's lithograph of the hills of the San Francisco Presidio was originally drawn without the Spaniard on horseback and the group of Indians he is directing. (This earlier depiction is the dust jacket illustration of Langellier's book, *El Presidio de San Francisco*.) The entire scene was clearly repainted in Paris, with people added, during the making of the lithograph published in Choris's book. If Choris did not personally paint such new and more detailed lithographic images, it is known that he, at the very least, directed and approved them. See Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes*, p. 100, fn. 10. One book is unique in containing earlier versions of two other published Choris lithographs (*Indians Dancing at Mission Dolores* and *Three Indians in Tule Canoe*), plus four additional illustrations and sketches by Choris, which, to this author's knowledge, have not been published elsewhere: John Galvin, ed., *The First Spanish Entry into San Francisco Bay 1775* (San Francisco: John Howell, 1971). These plates are credited either to the Bancroft Library (most famously, the earlier version of *Indians Dancing at the Mission*) or to the editor's family library.
58. Harry T. Peters, *California on Stone* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1935), pp. 97–98. An original Choris watercolor of three Native Americans is held on loan by the Oakland Museum of California, part of the Albert Schumate collection. A previously unknown, original Choris watercolor from San Francisco was also identified in the Estonian History Museum at Tallinn, Estonia, entitled "Indians from New Albion." See Blackburn, "A 'New' Choris Watercolor," *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1999), pp. 154–157. Choris's unexpected use of Drake's "New Albion" terminology is said to derive from the Russians' reluctance to recognize Spanish authority in the area.
59. Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes*, p. 115.

DASHIELL HAMMETT'S SAN FRANCISCO IN THE 1920S

by Monika Trobits

2011 marks ninety years since Dashiell Hammett first arrived in San Francisco and more than eighty years since the original publication of his best-known novel, *The Maltese Falcon*. Hammett lived in San Francisco throughout the 1920s and did the lion's share of his writing there. He incorporated many of his San Francisco experiences into his stories. Two of his novels were set in the City, one in whole and one in part, as were more than two dozen of his short stories. Another novel referenced the City through its characters. Hammett included many San Francisco locales in those stories—its sites, its terrain, and its streets—but would he and his characters still recognize the San Francisco of the twenty-first century?

The San Francisco of the 1920s was reconstructed on the dampened ashes and jagged remains of the 1906 earthquake and fire. Rebuilding had begun almost immediately after that cataclysmic event and a new city arose, bit by bit, propelling San Francisco into the twentieth century. In the decades following 1906, much of the old city, the San Francisco of the post-Gold Rush era, gave way to the post-World War I, new modern verve of the 1920s and beyond.

Samuel Dashiell Hammett wouldn't have readily recognized the San Francisco of old since his residency in the early 1920s coincided with the rising new city. But that post-1906 city is now no

longer new. Waves of additional development occurred throughout the twentieth century and continue into the twenty-first. The subsequent architectural activity may cause one to pause and wonder whether the San Francisco of Hammett's time has entirely disappeared. Or, is there much that still remains from the 1920s that he would recognize today—the buildings he lived in, the restaurants where he ate his meals, the places in which he worked, or the speakeasies, theaters, and other businesses he frequented? And then, there are also the many sites and characteristics of the city that he incorporated into his San Francisco-based short stories and novels. What, if any, changes have occurred with respect to them over the last nine decades? Consideration of all of the above leads one to the question of whether Hammett and his characters would still be able to find their way around current-day San Francisco.

Hammett wasn't a San Francisco native. He was born to a tobacco-farming family in rural Maryland in 1894, and mainly grew up in Baltimore.¹ After a series of odd jobs, he answered a want ad placed by the Baltimore branch of the Pinkerton National Detective agency and was hired as an operative, or "op," in 1914. By signing on with Pinkerton, Hammett became a "private eye," a term that stems from the agency's logo of a large, all-seeing eye, suggesting ubiquitous vigilance.² The term *private eye* became synonymous with that of *private detective*, and distinguished



*Hammett's San Francisco of the 1920s (looking west from the Ferry Building to Twin Peaks).
Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.*

the operatives from the public detectives, who were more commonly known as the local police.³ Hammett was initially paid about \$21 per week by Pinkerton⁴ to be one of its “eyes” and would often be on call 24/7. Through his affiliation with that organization, he eventually moved on to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., and then incrementally made his way west, working for Pinkerton as both a strikebreaker and a detective. By the late teens, his monthly income had risen to \$105.⁵ He arrived in San Francisco by way of Washington State in 1921, and was by that point earning about \$6 a day as an operative.⁶

In the fall of 1921, Hammett was one of the “Pinks” assigned to investigate the Fatty Arbuckle scandal, based on an incident that had occurred in adjoining twelfth-floor suites of the St. Francis

Hotel (across from San Francisco’s Union Square) during Labor Day weekend. Arbuckle, at the time a very popular silent screen comedian, was hosting an open-house party to celebrate his new three-million-dollar contract with Paramount Pictures. Within a few days, he would find himself arrested for the rape and murder of one of the women who crashed the party. Pinkerton was hired by Arbuckle’s defense team to sort out what had actually happened. Arbuckle himself likely left quite an impression on Hammett. He was a big man, about 300 pounds, and may have been one of the inspirations for the “fat men” that Hammett would later incorporate into several of his short stories and novels.

However, as it turned out, Hammett would only briefly work for the local Pinkerton branch,



*The Flood Building at Market and Powell Streets in the 1920s. Pinkerton's offices were in suite 314.
Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.*

whose offices were then located in the Flood Building on Market Street at the foot of Powell Street. His employment there was cut short in early 1922 when his tuberculosis, which initially surfaced in 1918 during service in World War I, reactivated. That forced him to resign from Pinkerton and look for another, less physically-demanding line of work to support himself, his wife, Josephine (Jose), and their baby daughter, Mary Jane. (A second daughter, Josephine Rebecca, would be born in 1926.) Hammett applied for veterans' benefits and was awarded a monthly benefit of \$80 based on his 100 percent disabled status.⁷ While recovering, he considered

alternatives to his work as a Pinkerton operative.

He set out to be a writer, an easier line of work to be sure on a physical level, but filled with the challenges of launching oneself in that endeavor and becoming financially successful. Hammett had the additional challenge of being hampered by his insufficient education. He had less than a year of high school studies, as he had dropped out in 1908 at the age of fourteen to help support his family. (Coincidentally, he briefly attended the same Baltimore high school that Edgar Allan Poe had attended decades earlier.⁸) Now approaching thirty, going back to high school was impractical for Hammett and college was not an option at all.

He filled the gaps in his education by spending countless afternoons at San Francisco's old Main Library at Larkin and McAllister Streets (reconfigured in 2003 to house the Asian Art Museum), reading profusely about a myriad of topics that would serve to round out his limited knowledge of the world. The diversity of subject matter that Hammett covered during these library reading sessions would later factor significantly in several of his short stories and novels.

Nothing in Hammett's background suggested a future as a successful writer. There was no history of writing in his adolescence. He had been inadequately educated, had no mentors or writing associates, and no authors served as role models in his life. He had, however, always been an avid reader and particularly enjoyed mysteries. Moreover, through his work for Pinkerton, Hammett had learned how to keenly observe people and record his insights. As an operative, he

had written a seemingly endless stream of extensive reports about suspicious individuals and the cases they were involved with, meticulously noting all the details about their appearances and their mannerisms.⁹ To further facilitate his prospective writing career, he learned touch-typing through vocational training at the Munson School for Private Secretaries, then located at 600 Sutter Street in San Francisco.¹⁰ The training was paid for by the Veterans' Bureau under the guise of a potential career in news reporting or advertising writing. The curriculum included stenography courses, which Hammett did not take, but which perhaps influenced him to frequently include the presence of stenographers in his stories.¹¹ In any event, Hammett apparently now felt fully armed to launch his new career from his kitchen table at 620 Eddy Street. He put to use his unique combination of intelligence and oral story-telling abilities, ongoing library-read-



Dashiell Hammett's "college." The old main San Francisco Public Library on the east end of Civic Center as it appeared in 1927. Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

ing-room education, newly-acquired typing skills, and experience writing hundreds of Pinkerton case reports. It was a dubious beginning indeed in a field where so many, with so much more in the way of qualifications, had failed miserably.

He began small, with short stories. The first, "The Barber and His Wife," was completed in the spring of 1922 and only vaguely referenced San Francisco through mentions of its hills, its fog, and a local boxing match. Though running barely a dozen pages, in this initial effort Hammett demonstrated that he could indeed write fiction and that he had the ability to create and develop his characters. But it would take more than that. He also had to learn the mechanics of getting his work published and actually make a living as a writer, and he set out to accomplish just that.

Hammett's first short story was unlike his later works in content, but did include elements that would be common to many of his future stories, both short and long. Readers of "The Barber and His Wife" will note that the characters in this story emerged fully-blown,¹² that is, no background information on them was offered. The story was essentially a day in the life of the individuals depicted. In addition, their socio-economic status was working class; there were no children present or referenced; the appearances of the characters were carefully detailed; and the story was set in San Francisco. In this initial short story, Hammett also introduced the concept of a "fat man" as one of the characters, an idea he would return to again and again with his most famous fat man yet to come: Casper Gutman in *The Maltese Falcon*.¹³

The first order of business for Hammett was to locate a publisher for his story, but his submissions to various magazines generated only rejections. Hammett then wrote and submitted other stories, but they, too, were rejected. In mid-1922, however, a brief essay of just over one hundred words—an anecdote, really, called "The Parthian Shot"—was accepted by a periodical called *The Smart Set*. Co-edited by none other than H.L. Mencken, coincidentally a resident of Hammett's hometown, Baltimore, *The Smart Set* was an influential literary magazine in its day and well known

for nurturing the careers of emerging writers.¹⁴ Hammett's piece had fortuitously landed in front of the eyes of Mencken himself. Not only was it published that October, but Hammett, to his delight, was promptly paid. At a penny a word, this came to \$1.13. The fee was not a grand amount, to be sure; more important was the valuable exposure Hammett received as a published writer in a prominent literary publication. Later that same year, Mencken published another of Hammett's stories, a nonfiction selection titled "The Great Lovers."¹⁵

As Hammett's writing progressed, it began to reflect what all novice writers are told: "Write about what you know." What Hammett knew was his work with the Pinkerton Agency. The acceptance, finally, of his first fictional short story ("The Barber and His Wife") for publication in the December 1922 issue of *Brief Stories*,¹⁶ a pulp fiction



Cover of *Smart Set* Magazine, September 1911.
Courtesy of Wikipedia.

magazine, might have given Hammett the confidence to write his first quasi-detective story. The narrative for that story would feature a character named Hagedorn who, after pursuing a criminal halfway around the world, is faced with the temptations of corruption. Hammett called it "The Road Home." Perhaps still a bit uncomfortable with its subject matter, he submitted it under a pseudonym, Peter Collinson.¹⁷ It was accepted by a still relatively new pulp fiction publication, *The Black Mask*, which had debuted in April of 1920 at the price of twenty cents an issue.¹⁸ In time, Hammett would become one of that magazine's most important contributing writers. Once again, H.W. Mencken would play a significant role.

The Smart Set, for all its other virtues, was a "slick," so characterized for the smooth, glossy paper upon which it was printed. However, Mencken and his partner, co-editor George Jean Nathan, found they were not making enough money with *The Smart Set*. They decided to start up a series of pulp fiction magazines. Once they got each one up and running, they planned to then sell it at a profit. "Pulps" differed from "slicks" in that they were printed on cheap, unfinished paper (made from raw, ground wood-pulp) and focused on what were then regarded as non-literary type stories such as mysteries, romances, westerns, and detective stories. The pulp they called *The Black Mask* was an alternative publication for the type of story that Hammett would eventually become known for, although he initially wasn't overjoyed that his work would be published there. He found the magazine to be crude in its presentation, its stories overwritten and often florid in style, misrepresentative of how Hammett believed a detective story should be written.¹⁹ He preferred a continued association with the more prestigious and intellectually honest *Smart Set*, even though the pay rate was the same, a penny a word. He



Dashiell Hammett was one of the fathers of hardboiled writing in the 1920s. His stories in Black Mask have the lean, pared-down style that was to become the trademark of the tough, action-packed crime yarns that were to follow in the heyday of the magazine. Courtesy of Google images.

was concerned that *The Black Mask* would be viewed as unsophisticated and unappealing to more educated readers. In the long run, however, this magazine proved to be the ideal forum for Hammett's detective stories. Hammett's goal was, after all, to get his work published and be paid for it. And Hammett himself would eventually play a significant role in shaping the magazine and solidifying its reputation. On its way to becoming the best of the pulp publications, *The Black Mask* appealed to a wide range of readers, including what would emerge as the most significant pulp readership: "the growing mass of literate working

citizens." These readers were "predominantly male, predominantly urban and almost entirely working class."²⁰ Hammett's timing and positioning were perfect. He was well on his way to becoming *The Black Mask's* most popular writer and accomplishing his goal of a financially successful writing career.

What particularly distinguished Hammett's detective stories was how different they were from the traditional and popular detective stories the public had been reading for decades. Detective fiction had been born in the nineteenth century, in conjunction with the rise of organized law enforcement agencies which had sprung up in newly industrialized European cities such as London and Paris. Initially, however, these stories were actually memoirs. Among their authors was Allan Pinkerton, who, in 1850, founded the detective agency that Hammett would eventually work for. Edgar Allan Poe is generally acknowledged as having written the first fictional detective stories, and in them established particular patterns that many subsequent detective fiction writers would follow.²¹ Hammett had read many of these types of stories, but often found them silly.²² The detectives created by Poe (C. Auguste Dupin), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Sherlock Holmes), and Agatha Christie (Hercule Poirot), for example, tended to be gentlemen detectives in Hammett's eyes. They were very polished, upper class, erudite, famous, and European. They lived comfortably, dressed nicely, and ate well. They did very little grunt work and none did endless paperwork. Every case was presented to readers as a puzzle that needed to be worked out. Cases would usually be rationally solved by a seemingly brilliant detective sitting comfortably in an armchair in front of a roaring fire.²³ As far as Hammett was concerned, there was too much thinking and talking, and not enough action. That's not what detective work was, according to his experience, and that would not be how he would choose to represent his detectives. Hammett's detectives would be American, and many of his stories would play out as "urban version(s) of the Westerns," featuring "street-wise cowboy(s)."²⁴

It is important to remember that Hammett was not a writer trying to be a detective, but rather a detective trying to be a writer. That's what made his work so distinctive.²⁵ Unlike Poe, Doyle, and Christie, Hammett didn't need to make it up. He knew what it meant to be a private detective and was familiar with the questionable kinds of people one encountered from all socio-economic levels when pursuing that line of work. He also realized the benefit of being a private eye versus being a public detective, and incorporated that difference into his stories. A Hammett detective was generally on the side of the law and often worked with public detectives such as the police. But a Hammett detective wasn't always strictly law-abiding. He frequently bent the rules when working his way through a case. That's how the job got done.²⁶ This was a reality that Hammett knew all too well. In addition, he had experienced both the dangerous and the humorous situations one would come across as an operative, the often unsavory nature of the work, the societal corruption, the long hours that detective work frequently required, and the potential excitement attached to it—all of which had held Hammett's boredom at bay. He knew detective work inside and out, and that's what he decided he would begin writing about. He would put on the page the realism and grittiness of urban crime from an experienced detective's perspective—his own perspective. Down the road, that's the type of story that would become known as hard-boiled fiction.²⁷ Hammett would turn it all into a serious literary endeavor. Through his characters and the changing social mores of the 1920s and 30s, it would form the basis for film noir.²⁸

Hammett enjoyed a relatively decent start as fledgling writer. In 1922, he had managed to get five of his stories published in magazines such as *The Smart Set*, *The Black Mask*, and *Brief Stories*. The following year proved to be even better as sixteen of Hammett's stories were published in various magazines. In addition to those noted above, the others included a literary magazine named *The New Pearsons*²⁹ and still another Mencken/Nathan pulp: *Saucy Stories*, a publication that featured risqué fiction.³⁰



Black Mask get together January 11, 1936.

*Back Row L-R: Raymond J. Moffatt, Raymond Chandler, Herbert Stinson, Dwight Babcock, Eric Taylor, Dashiell Hammett
Front: Arthur Barnes, John K. Butler, W. T. Ballard, Horace McCoy, Norbert Davis. Courtesy of Google images.*

By 1923 things were going well for Hammett, but then came some unexpected news. He was notified by the Veterans' Bureau that it had determined that Hammett's health had sufficiently improved and he was no longer eligible for monthly disability benefits. That was, without a doubt, an unwelcomed turn of events. Hammett's protest and appeal for the continuation of the \$80 monthly benefit payments were ignored. Hammett and his family very much depended upon that income, and even with triple the number of his stories published in 1923, as compared with 1922, the collective revenue they would generate was not enough to replace the benefit checks. Clearly,

Hammett had to write more stories, produce them at a faster rate, and increase their appeal to the reading public, while building anticipation for future stories. Doing so might even increase the payment-per-word rate for his stories from one penny to perhaps three, five, or even ten cents a word. Hammett decided that the best way to accomplish this task would be to emulate the successful strategy of Poe, Doyle, and Christie: create a detective character, establish a persona for that character, and write a series of stories with that character playing a significant and consistent role. However, Hammett's first serial detective would not only differ from the characters of

Dupin, Holmes, and Poirot in style and method, but in one other way as well: Hammett's detective would not have a name.

Hammett referred to his newly created detective character as the Continental Op. He introduced the character during the last quarter of 1923 in a short story called "Arson Plus,"³¹ again using the Collinson pen name. The tale was mainly set in Sacramento, but cast a lengthy shadow that extended west, all the way to San Francisco. Subsequent Op stories noted that he worked for the Continental Detective Agency, which appeared to have its offices in the Flood Building at 870 Market Street (where, coincidentally, the offices for the Pinkerton Detective Agency were also located).³² Careful reading of the Op stories revealed that the mystery detective was not a San Francisco native, but rather a resident of approximately five years who had transferred to this city from Chicago. The Op's boss, the head of the local Continental Agency office, would also be nameless. In the stories he was referred to as "the Old Man."

The Continental Op was partially modeled on a real Op whom Hammett had known from his early days with Pinkerton, a man by the name of James Wright, assistant superintendent of the Baltimore Pinkerton office, then located in that city's Continental Building.³³ Jimmy Wright had actually trained Hammett. Wright's mentorship stressed the basic moral code of operatives: not becoming emotionally involved with clients; maintaining integrity and objectivity; and remaining anonymous.³⁴ In his stories, Hammett described the Op as all business. He was on the short side and rotund (a fat man). He was an undistinguished, unglamorous working-class individual in his late thirties or early forties who lacked a personal life. He was solely dedicated to being an Op.³⁵ The Continental Op's physical description was one thing; his persona was actually that of Hammett himself—clever and tenacious. Many of the Op stories were based on actual cases that Hammett had worked on in San Francisco and in other parts of the country.

On October 1, 1923, *The Black Mask* published "Arson Plus," followed two weeks later by two



Black Mask was a pulp magazine launched in 1920 by journalist H. L. Mencken and drama critic George Jean Nathan as one of a number of money-making publishing ventures to support the prestigious literary magazine "The Smart Set." Courtesy of Google images.

more San Francisco-based Op stories, "Slippery Fingers" and "Crooked Souls" (also known as "The Gatewood Caper").³⁶ The magazine's readership was receptive to these first three Op stories, and Hammett decided to drop the Collinson pseudonym and use his own first name of Samuel for future story submissions. He then submitted an Op story called "Bodies Piled Up" (also known as "House Dick"), which the magazine published in late 1923 as having been written by Dashiell Hammett. This latest story was also set in San Francisco, and was also well received. That encouraged additional Op stories. The new year would begin with another Op/San Francisco story, "The Tenth Claw," published in

the January 1, 1924 edition of *The Black Mask*. With the successful introduction of the Continental Op, a new page had been turned in the genre of detective fiction—and Dashiell Hammett had turned it.

By the mid-1920s, Hammett's stories were selling well, but the income they generated was still inadequate for him and his family. He clearly needed to make more money but was hesitant to return to Pinkerton. Negotiations for a higher rate per word for his stories were unsuccessful. In 1926, Hammett placed a "job wanted" ad in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and managed to attract work as a writer, but a different sort of writer: an advertising copy writer. Using the training he had received at the Munson School, he worked briefly for a local shoe seller (and was paid with a pair of shoes³⁷) and then for Albert S. Samuels Jewelers, whose Market Street shop was known as the home of lucky wedding rings. Albert Samuels owned the oldest established jewelry business in San Francisco and by the mid-1920s had four locations in the city. Samuels was the first jeweler in the city to use newspaper ads to attract his customers and hired Hammett to create them. It would be a full-time job, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday.³⁸ Hammett wrote the advertising copy and also drew the jewelry images that went with it. In addition, he ghost-wrote the weekly 300-word essay ads that appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner*, which

were dramatic vignettes designed to attract and inspire potential customers to purchase jewelry. Albert Samuels was very pleased with the quality of Hammett's work, especially since it increased jewelry sales.

In the 1920s, one of the Samuels Jewelers shops was located on the ground level of the now-demolished Lincoln Building, formerly at Market and Fifth Streets (currently the site for the Westfield/San Francisco Centre, featuring Nordstrom as its anchor tenant and completed in



Samuels Jewelers' location at 895 Market Street in the old Lincoln Building (Market at Fifth Street). A grand street clock was placed in front of the shop in 1915.

In 1943, the shop and the clock moved across the street to 856 Market.
Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

1988). In 1915, a grand sidewalk clock had been positioned near its front entrance at 895 Market, advertising the presence of Samuels Jewelers.³⁹ Hammett's new employer was nearly directly across the street from his former employer, the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

Hammett developed a good rapport with Albert Samuels and his co-workers, and he enjoyed his work. He especially appreciated his monthly salary of \$350,⁴⁰ which was more than his veterans' disability check and his sales of fiction in an average month, put together. His employment at the jewelry shop was short-lived, however, lasting only about five months. Hammett's tuberculosis-related health issues reactivated once again, exacerbated by San Francisco's fog and his own steadily increasing drinking. A higher monthly income meant more money to pay the bills and to support his family, but it also meant more money for alcohol. A serious recurrence of his tuberculosis, which included Hammett's passing out on site at Samuels and coughing up blood, caused him to initially lessen his hours to part-time status. He eventually resigned from his position altogether. To avoid potentially infecting his family, Hammett had already moved to a tiny apartment on Monroe Street, which was closer to the Market Street jewelry shop and also shortened his daily commute.⁴¹ Albert Samuels, to his credit, remained supportive of Hammett and his writing endeavors and even wrote a letter on his behalf to the Veterans' Bureau, acknowledging Hammett's illness. Doing so helped to secure a 100 percent disability status for Hammett and the reinstatement of his benefits, which now paid \$100 monthly.⁴² He and his family would live on those benefits while he eventually went back to writing his Op stories. Hammett would later publicly acknowledge Samuels's kindness by dedicating his second novel, *The Dain Curse*, to Albert S. Samuels.⁴³ Doing so was an appropriate gesture of appreciation on Hammett's part, since the novel, which was partially set in San Francisco and partially in San Mateo County (just south of the city), began with the issue of stolen diamonds. He also had some fun when he named several of the characters



The Samuels Jewelers clock still stands in front of 856 Market Street and is a San Francisco city landmark.

The jewelry shop, however, closed in 1990.

This image from 1958 looks west on Market when Woolworth still occupied the street level of the Flood Building.

*Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center,
San Francisco Public Library.*

in the novel after his former co-workers.⁴⁴

Years later, Hammett admitted that he had also modeled a particular character in his third novel,

The Maltese Falcon, on a former female co-worker at Samuels Jewelers. That co-worker, Peggy O'Toole, was a San Franciscan and a graduate of Mission High School. She was also an advertising artist and Hammett's assistant at the jewelry shop.⁴⁵ In time, the two developed a rather close working and personal relationship. Miss O'Toole would later receive a dedicated and signed copy of the novel as a gift from Hammett—only to have it disappear from her bookshelf.

Jewelry would also play a role in at least two other Hammett tales, such as "The Whosis Kid," a story in which three partners in a jewel heist would cross, double-cross, and then triple-cross each other. A few years later, *The Maltese Falcon* would feature a jewel-encrusted statue in the form of a falcon, hotly pursued by several characters who engaged in various degrees of betrayal against each other in order to secure it.

As his health gradually improved, Hammett began writing again. He was enticed back to *Black Mask* by its new editor, Joseph T. Shaw. (In 1927, Shaw dropped the word "The" from the magazine's title.) Shaw not only promised higher per-word rates (of up to six cents), but also an opportunity to develop novel-length works.⁴⁶ Altogether, during the 1920s and early 30s, Hammett would write more than sixty short stories, with more than two dozen set in San Francisco, and many were published in *Black Mask*. He would also write five novels.

Despite its relatively new post-1906 look, San Francisco was still very conducive as a venue for the hard-boiled stories that Hammett wrote during the 1920s. Vice ran rampant in the city, which was in large part run by crooks and mobsters.⁴⁷ Local politicians from City Hall were corrupt, and in many respects the old Barbary Coast was alive and well in the gritty San Francisco of the 1920s.⁴⁸ Hammett unexpectedly found himself in the perfect urban environment for his stories, which also included pertinent atmospheric qualities such as the swirling waves of fog, the often turbulent, icy waters of the bay, the moaning of the foghorns, the blasts of the siren out on Alcatraz Island, and the exotic nature of Chinatown with its narrow streets.

Other relevant elements included the City's unique architecture and terrain, the clanging of the cable car bells, the ubiquitous streetcar lines, the transbay ferries, the watery inlets that were so handy for smugglers, the sometimes questionable activities on the docks, the illicit speakeasies in North Beach, the rickety stairways clinging to the sides of the city's many hills, and the countless narrow alleyways all around town. Most were distinctive San Francisco characteristics and Hammett would use them very effectively to illustrate his tales through the first-person voice of the Continental Op and, later, Sam Spade.

The San Francisco of the 1920s, Hammett's San Francisco, continued its recovery from the aftermath of the earthquake and fire of 1906. The section of the City where Hammett resided (Civic Center/Tenderloin) as well as those neighborhoods in which he set several of his stories (Union Square, Chinatown, Financial District) had for the most part been devastated in 1906. Residential and commercial buildings that he used for his tales of the city were generally post-1906 architecture; several were actually constructed during the years that Hammett lived, worked, and wrote in the city. Getting around the City was relatively easy at the time. Neither he nor his characters needed to drive cars and few did so, as streetcar and cable car lines crisscrossed the city in the 1920s and taxis were readily available.⁴⁹ Hammett incorporated ferries into his stories for travel across the San Francisco Bay, as neither the Oakland Bay nor Golden Gate Bridges had yet been constructed.

The Continental Op would often find himself at San Francisco's old Hall of Justice, then located on Kearney Street across from Portsmouth Square, where the Chinatown Hilton Hotel (a former Holiday Inn) is today. Hammett knew the old building well, since all three of the Fatty Arbuckle trials had been held there. (The building was a replacement for the original, which had been destroyed in 1906.) In 1923 he introduced the old Hall to readers in his second Op story, "Slippery Fingers." He would reference it many times and set scenes there for several of his short stories, including "The Tenth Clew," "Flypaper,"



*The Hall of Justice on Kearny Street (across from Portsmouth Square), which replaced the original Hall of Justice that had been destroyed in 1906, as it looked in the 1920s. This building was replaced by a hotel in the 1960s.
Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.*

and “The Golden Horseshoe.” The old Hall of Justice would also appear in *The Maltese Falcon*. Sooner or later, many of Hammett’s characters would find themselves at the old Hall, on one side of the bars or the other. And many would encounter a recurring character there, that of Detective Sergeant O’Gar, who was in charge of the Homicide Detail. The Continental Op worked with O’Gar on a number of cases.

It was appropriate for Hammett to feature the old Hall of Justice in his stories because it was an important site in its day, especially with respect to criminal activity, and was frequented by private and public detectives alike. He could not have

known that the old Hall would be demolished in the mid-1960s, when its operations were relocated to its current South-of-Market location at Seventh and Brannan Streets.

Heading south from the site of the old Hall of Justice on Kearny Street, toward the Financial District, brings one to the location of a Hammett story written in 1924, in which all of the action took place within sixty minutes. The story revolved around a stolen car occupied by a team of international counterfeiters, who had just killed a local printer. The tale has a swift and just resolution. Hammett called the story “One Hour,” and its setting was the area surrounded by Kearny, Clay,

Montgomery, and California Streets. Currently, the area is a mixture of old and new office buildings, including the adjacent Embarcadero Center, built on land that had been part of the City's old produce market in Hammett's day.

Market Street was crowded with streetcars in the 1920s and they all led to the Ferry Building, which remains prominently positioned at the street's east end. Since none of the bridges currently traversing the San Francisco Bay existed in Hammett's day, several of his characters frequented the Ferry Building and used the ferries to get to and from San Francisco. The Ferry Building, opened in 1898, played an important role as part of the city's transportation network. It would for several decades be the connecting link between

the streetcars and taxis in the city, which brought passengers to its front door, and the long-distance rail transport terminals on the other side of the bay. (The lack of direct transcontinental rail service to the city resulted in San Francisco having a grand ferry building but not a grand railway station, as most other major cities have.) In "The Tenth Clew," readers felt the chill of falling short of reaching the Ferry Building. In a particularly descriptive section of that story, Hammett related how the Op found himself swimming in the cold, choppy waters of the bay itself, trying to keep from drowning. This unexpected turn of events occurred after he had been pushed off the west-bound ferry, having gotten a little too close for comfort to a particular suspect.



The second of two Ferry Buildings, located at the east end of Market Street, as Hammett and his characters would have known it in the 1920s. Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

While Hammett successfully incorporated San Francisco's urban landscape into his stories, he was careful not to get too descriptive, rendering his stories much more timeless than those of other writers of his era and genre.⁵⁰ At the same time, his many references were real for the most part. Residents and visitors will recognize the names of the city's streets, neighborhoods, buildings, restaurants, and theaters in his stories.

Hammett's characters travelled many of the same streets of San Francisco: McAllister Street in "The Tenth Claw" and "The Whosis Kid"; The Great Highway in "The Main Death," and "Dead Yellow Women"; Pine Street in "Zigzags of Treachery" and "Death on Pine Street"; and California Street in "Arson Plus" and *The Maltese Falcon*. In "The Golden Horseshoe," the Op visited the residence of a character at Jackson near Gough, while "Creeping Siamese" brought the detective out to 1856 Broadway (probably 1812 from the description). "The Gatewood Caper" took the Op to a wealthy section of Clay Street, while in "The House in Turk Street," the Op landed in an unidentified but clearly dubious portion of that street. The Continental Op's investigative work in "The Big Knockover" had him venture out to Holly Circle, located near Cortland and Mission Streets.

Then, of course, there's Burritt Street, which really isn't much more than a dead-end alley that intersects with Bush Street just above the Stockton Street tunnel. This is probably the best known of all the streets Hammett mentioned in his stories, and for good reason. An official-looking plaque, installed at the entrance to Burritt in 1974, notes that:

On approximately this spot
Miles Archer
Partner of Sam Spade
was done in by
Brigid O'Shaughnessy.

The reference is to Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon* and to the shooting of Miles Archer, a detective whose body was found lying about fifteen feet down the hill (now occupied by the north wing of the McAlpin apartment building, which

fronts on Stockton Street). The directness of the Burritt Street plaque suggests to passersby that the parties mentioned are real people, while readers of the novel know otherwise. It can be a bit of a challenge to determine just what the plot of Hammett's story actually is, which, paraphrasing Sam Spade, appears to be a dizzy affair. It seems that the murder victim was a fictional character who was the partner of another, rather cynical, character and who was shot by the *femme fatale* in the story, who would then throw suspicion onto yet another character, who is neither directly seen nor heard from in the novel. The plot events are all connected to the aggressive pursuit of the aforementioned bejeweled Maltese Falcon and the pre-dawn murder of Mr. Archer. The entire story has been determined to take place in less than a week: December 5–10, 1928. This was in part established by the mention of a play that a character in the novel, Joel Cairo, attended at the Geary Theatre.⁵¹ More than eighty years later, *The Maltese Falcon* is still regarded by many as the best detective story set in San Francisco because in it, Hammett successfully combined his vivid writing style, a cast of dubious characters and his own detective skills with his 1920's life experience in the City. He also gave his own first name to the Spade character.

One wonders what Hammett would have thought if he had seen the above-noted plaque on Burritt Street, installed forty-four years following the publication of his now-famous novel. He probably passed this site frequently during his commute down to Samuels Jewelers on Market Street from his residence on nearby Monroe Street, which was renamed Dashiell Hammett Street in 1988.⁵²

Various San Francisco neighborhoods also played roles in Hammett's stories: Chinatown and the Old Latin Quarter in "Dead Yellow Women" and "House Dick"; Russian Hill in "The Tenth Claw" and "The Girl with the Silver Eyes"; Telegraph Hill, again in "Dead Yellow Women"; Nob Hill in "A Man Called Spade"; and the area around Union Square in "A Man Named Thin." "The Whosis Kid" included car chases in the Haight Ashbury and North Beach neighborhoods

and, occasionally, Hammett's characters would venture out to the city's outside lands: Westwood Park in "The Main Death" and Sea Cliff in "The Scorched Face." They also went to Golden Gate Park (a very convenient place to dump bodies) in "Zigzags of Treachery" and "The Tenth Clew"; down to the old Southern Pacific and Santa Fe rail yards in "Fly Paper" (after a chase along The Embarcadero, heading towards China Basin); and over to the Townsend Street train station and the post office at Seventh and Mission in "The Golden Horseshoe." The Continental Op would even climb the Filbert Steps on the eastern slope of Telegraph Hill in "The Scorched Face" so that he could give an "egg yolk-yellow" house the once-over. While new housing has been added to Telegraph Hill since Hammett's day, much of the working-class style architecture on the Hill (cottages and small houses, not grand Victorians) remains as it was in the 1920s. The Continental Op would have little difficulty locating the egg yolk-yellow house today, even though it's now probably a different color.

The silent film and vaudeville house known as the Orpheum Theatre would briefly be referenced in "Dead Yellow Women" and again in "A Man Named Thin." (This is not the current Orpheum at Market and Hyde, but rather the original theatre bearing that name, located at 147 O'Farrell and replaced by the Ellis-O'Farrell parking garage in the late thirties.)⁵³ The Geary Theatre (built in 1910 as the Columbia Theatre and now the home of the American Conservatory Theatre) was where Sam Spade deliberately ran into Joel Cairo in *The Maltese Falcon*.

Several of Hammett's stories dealt with large



Looking east toward Market Street: 147 O'Farrell was the site of the Orpheum Theatre (right), featuring vaudeville, that Hammett mentioned in two of his short stories. In 1929 the Orpheum name was given to the Pantages (Market Street at Hyde), and this theater was renamed the Columbia. It was torn down in 1937; the Ellis-O'Farrell garage now occupies this site. Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

sums of disappearing (or mysteriously appearing) cash, and he created two fictitious Montgomery Street banks. Seaman's National Bank was referenced many times, beginning with the first Continental Op story, "Arson Plus." Golden Gate Trust was also frequently mentioned in stories such as "The Girl with the Silver Eyes." Hammett positioned these two banks in San Francisco's

Financial District, on Montgomery Street between Pine and Bush, directly across the street from each other. Both played significant roles in two of Hammett's 1927 stories that were linked: "The Big Knockover" and "\$106,000 Blood Money." In these sequential stories, about 150 crooks from all over the country descended upon San Francisco and the two banks when they opened for business on a certain day, overwhelming their staffs and looting them both within twenty minutes. The criminals ended up being double-crossed and seeking revenge, and they wreaked havoc on San Francisco. These two stories were viewed by some readers and critics as Hammett's commentary on American capitalism. The Continental Op and his associates, along with the local police, were assigned to sort out the particulars of this bank caper and its aftermath.

Prohibition was already in effect when Hammett arrived in San Francisco and would not end until after his departure. A substantial drinker, he became very familiar with the speakeasies that sprung up in the city and incorporated several into his stories: Larrouy's on Broadway in North Beach was featured in "The Big Knockover," among other stories; Loop Pigatti's Place in the Latin Quarter, often described as a dive down on Pacific Avenue, was a site noted in "Dead Yellow Women," "House Dick/Bodies Piled Up" and other stories; and the liquor also flowed freely at Wop Healy's place, The Circle.

Apartment buildings around the city were also featured in his stories. A good example is 580 McAllister at Franklin Street, featured in the 1925 tale "The Whosis Kid" and home of the fictional female jewel thief, Ines Almed. Ines lived up on the third level with her fluffy dog Frana, which was dyed purple, on the back end of the building. Redwood Alley runs behind the building; in Hammett's day it ran straight through to Van Ness Avenue (though in the story, he referred to it as Redwood Street). That changed in 1985, when the L-shaped California State Building was erected on Van Ness, covering the entire stretch from McAllister Street to Golden Gate Avenue, continuing west around the corner

to Franklin Street. In Hammett's story, the Whosis Kid was keeping his eye on Ines since he suspected she was double-crossing him. The Kid was very familiar with the alley Hammett called Redwood Street, as he lived in the three-story rooming house that once occupied the site where the north end of the State Building is now. In other words, the back side of the Kid's rooming house and the back side of 580 McAllister faced each other across Redwood and both had rear entrances.

Hammett mentioned many other apartment buildings as well: the Amsterdam, the Coronet, the Futurity, the Garford, the Glenton, the Glenway, and the San Martin, to name a few. It appears, however, that he made up these building names since they cannot be matched to lists of apartment buildings that existed in San Francisco during the 1920s. The Coronet Apartments (Brigid O'Shaughnessy's residence in *The Maltese Falcon*), could be the Cathedral Apartments at 1201 California Street (at Jones), but it's important to note that the latter building was not completed until 1930, after the novel was completed. Also, in chapter six of the novel, Sam Spade takes a west-bound streetcar on Sutter (from Hyde Street) and gets off "within a half dozen blocks of the Coronet" and then walks up to it. This passage suggests that the Coronet Apartments were actually located near or past Van Ness Avenue, the Coronet is most likely an entirely fictitious building. (Hammett does mention the Cathedral Apartments in an early draft of *The Thin Man*, so he was indeed aware of that building.)

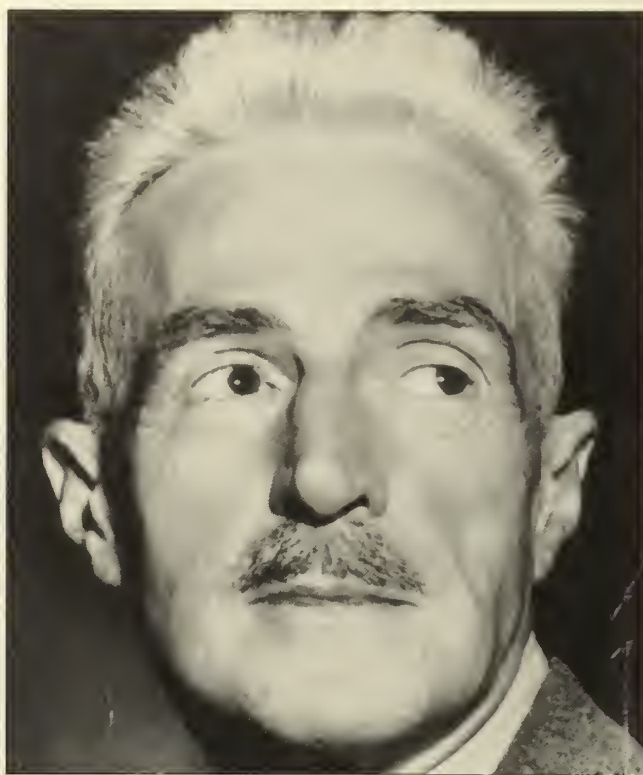
Floyd Thursby, the off-stage character who moved the action in *The Maltese Falcon* but who had no speaking role, apparently lived in a residential hotel on Geary Street at the intersection of Leavenworth. It's difficult, even when carefully reading the novel, to pinpoint exactly which building qualifies as Thursby's likely residence. But, since little has changed at that intersection since the 1920s, it could be any one of the apartment buildings still there today.

Hammett rarely used the actual name of any San Francisco hotel. It's not impossible to figure out which hotels he was referring to in his stories,

however, though it can be a bit of a puzzle. The St. Mark Hotel in *The Maltese Falcon* and “A Man Called Spade” is most likely the St. Francis Hotel (with a reference to the Mark Hopkins, which had just opened on Nob Hill in 1925). The Sir Francis Drake on Powell Street (also opened in 1925), was most likely the model for the Alexandria Hotel, which included among its fictional guests Caspar Gutman and his daughter, Rhea (in the novel, he had one). Another *Maltese Falcon* character, Joel Cairo, stayed at the Hotel Belvedere, which was probably a pseudonym for the Hotel Bellevue on Geary at Taylor and just one block west of the Geary Theatre on Geary near Mason Street.

Many other hotels were listed in the Continental Op short stories: The Marquis Hotel appeared in at least three: “The Girl with the Silver Eyes,” “The Whosis Kid,” and “Slippery Fingers.” There was an actual Marquise Hotel at 917 Kearny. Likewise, there was and still is a real Mars Hotel at 192 Fourth Street near Howard and could be the same site mentioned in “The Main Death.” The Hotel Montgomery was mentioned in several stories (“Zigzags of Treachery,” “Creeping Siamese,” “Bodies Piled Up” aka “House Dick,” and a few others), but there’s no evidence that it ever actually existed. What’s more likely is that the Montgomery Hotel was a pseudonym for the Palace Hotel, located on New Montgomery Street at Market.

Hammett was much more straightforward regarding restaurants. John’s Grill on Ellis Street is most often associated with him and his novel *The Maltese Falcon*. John’s has been around since 1908 and Hammett himself enjoyed many meals there; apparently Sam Spade did so, as well (though it’s unlikely that any portion of the novel was written there, despite what the plaque near the front entrance indicates). John’s Grill houses a small museum to Hammett and Spade up on its second floor and was named a literary landmark in 1997. It continues to offer the classic Spade meal of chops, a baked potato, and sliced tomatoes. Today diners can enjoy a “Bloody Brigid” with that entrée and take home the glass with an image of a black bird on it as a souvenir.



Dashiell Hammett, American writer and San Francisco resident during the 1920s. Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Hammett also mentioned other restaurants in his stories, such as Julius Castle, which opened in 1922 at the north end of Montgomery Street on Telegraph Hill. This was where Spade took his secretary, Effie Perine, for dinner toward the end of “A Man Called Spade” after a long day spent investigating the Bliss case on Nob Hill. Sam Spade sorted out the details of the murder of Max Bliss in the fictional Amsterdam Apartments as he and Effie sipped their coffee near a picture window featuring a view of ferryboats plying the waters of the San Francisco Bay. In *The Maltese Falcon*, Spade took himself to lunch at the Palace Hotel, although Hammett doesn’t designate exactly where in the Palace Spade enjoyed his meals.

The Maltese Falcon also states that Spade ate dinner at the old Herbert’s Grill at 151 Powell Street, which was on the ground level of the Herbert Hotel, just down the street from Union Square. Hammett most likely ate there, as well,



The Pickwick Terminal Hotel on Fifth Street at Mission, as it looked in 1929, when Hammett was writing *The Maltese Falcon*. Sam Spade temporarily stashed the falcon in the Pickwick Stage Terminal's parcel room located in the rear of the hotel on the Jessie Street side. Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

though the restaurant was actually known as Herbert's Bachelor Grill in his day. The Grill and the Herbert Hotel were operated by the Herbert Brothers, and in the 1920s both catered to men only. It wasn't until 1933 that the Grill welcomed female diners (over the initial protests of some of the older male clientele, who managed to get over it).⁵⁴ The Herbert Hotel is still there at 161 Powell Street and the Grill, at 151, was most recently called Herbert's Mexican Grill (the site is no longer a dining establishment).

Other restaurants in the Union Square area that Hammett mentioned in his stories included the St. Germaine Café, a French-Italian restaurant which was at 60–64 Ellis Street (across from

John's Grill); Tait's (one of many and also known as Tait-Zinkand) at 168 O'Farrell, formerly across the street from the original Orpheum Theater; and Marquard's, a French restaurant at Geary and Mason Streets (now Max's on the Square).⁵⁵

The Continental Op would enjoy a quick dinner at Blanco's Restaurant in *The Dain Curse*. Blanco's was located at 857 O'Farrell⁵⁶ in the building that now houses The Great American Music Hall. There's still a reference to Blanco's painted in large white letters near the roofline of the rear of the building (viewable from Olive Street, an alley between Polk and Larkin Streets).

Another restaurant that has also come and gone, the old States Hof Brau, was located for

many years in the basement of the former Pacific Building at 821 Market (at Fourth Street).⁵⁷ This was where Sam Spade met Detective Sergeant Tom Polhaus in *The Maltese Falcon* for a lunch of pickled pigs feet to discuss developments in the case they were mutually working on. While the restaurant is long gone, the green-tile and crème, terra-cotta, twelve-story building is still there and easily identified by its corner vertical sign, noting the building as the site of the Palomar Hotel (upper levels) along with its retail tenant, Old Navy (first four levels). A double-faced clock attached to the corner of the building reminds passersby that it's "Time to Shop."

Hammett may have been reluctant to use the actual names of banks, apartment buildings, and hotels because in his stories, crimes occurred there. Most likely, their owners and managers would not appreciate such an association. Restaurants, theatres, and other public places could be named because they were not the venues for crimes in Hammett's tales.

The Flood Building at 870 Market Street has been on that site since 1904 and features a small exhibit in its lobby, which includes a replica of the black bird of *The Maltese Falcon* (alas, without the jewels). The nearby plaque is misleading since Hammett did not write the novel until many years after he stopped working for Pinkerton, which had its offices in suite 314 during the 1920s. A few blocks away on Mission Street (at Mint Alley) and just west of the Old Mint building is another Spade-related site, the Remedial Loan Association (Provident Loans). Sam Spade referred Brigid O'Shaughnessy to the Remedial as a good place in which to hock her jewels to raise some necessary cash after taking the monies she had.

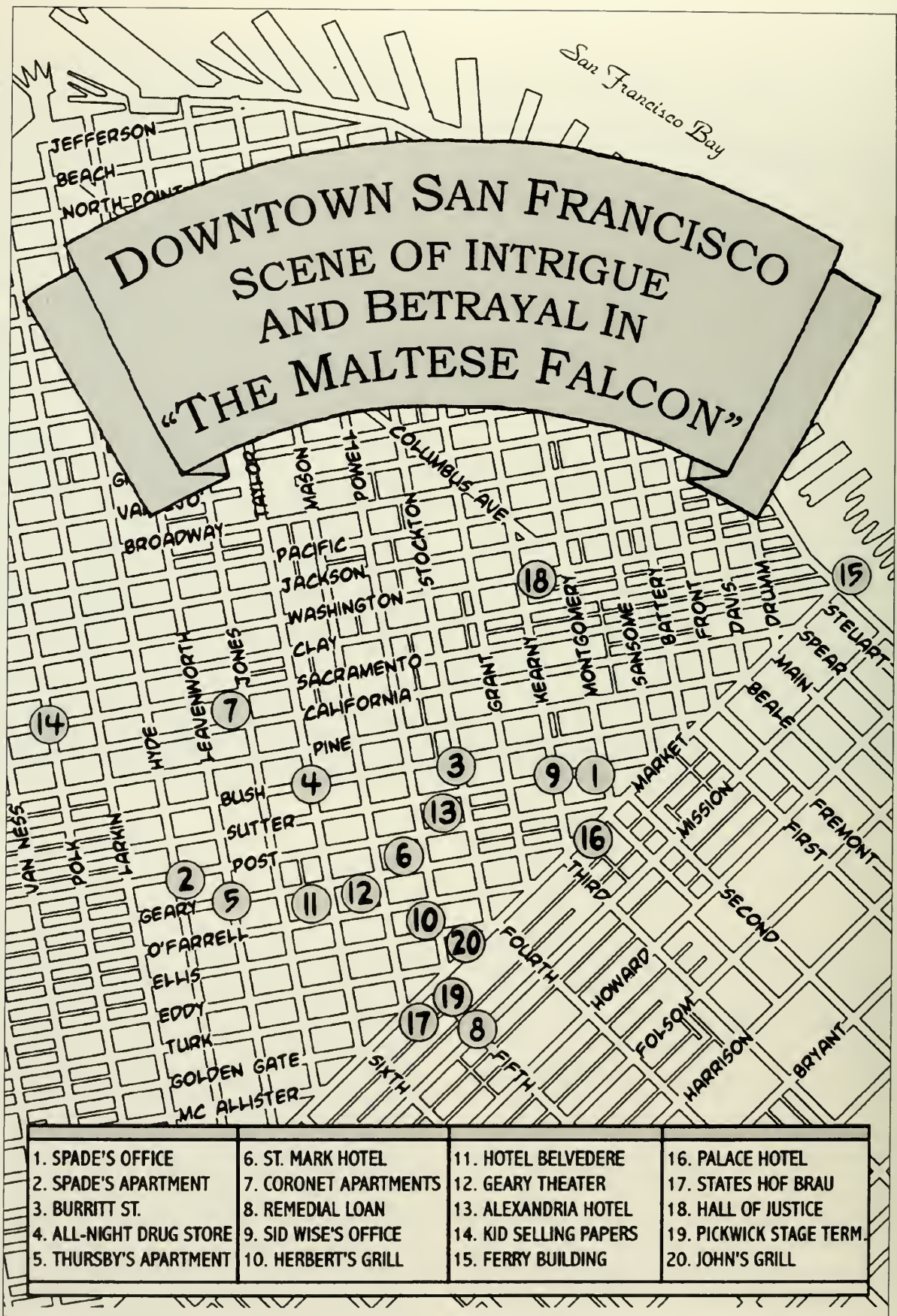
Across from the Old Mint on Fifth Street is the Pickwick Hotel, which was opened in 1925 and indirectly played a role in *The Maltese Falcon*. Sam Spade would stash the brown paper-wrapped bundle containing the infamous black bird in the parcel room of the former Pickwick Stage Terminal (actually a bus depot by then and across the back alley from the hotel near Jessie Street) until he could sort out exactly what was going on



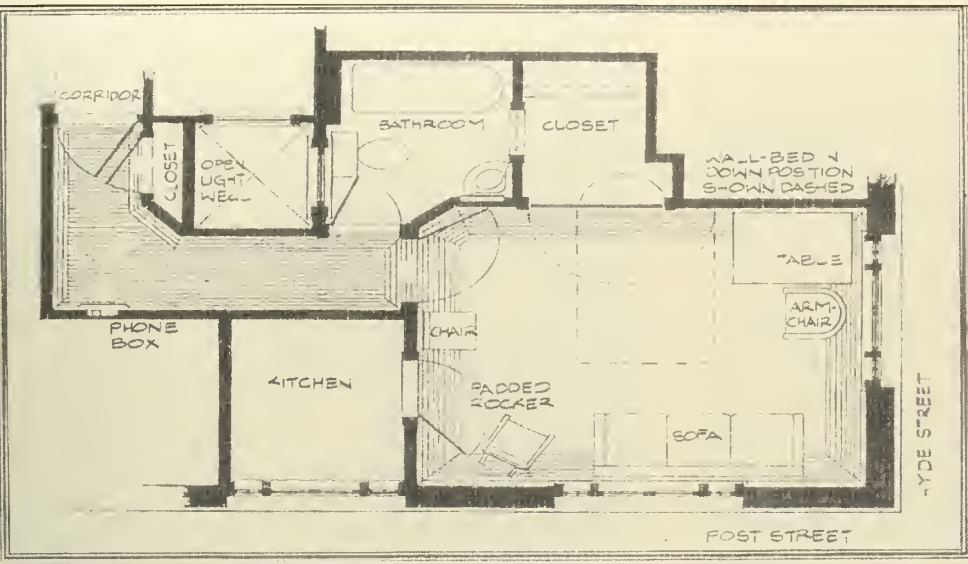
The Hunter-Dulin Building, located at 111 Sutter Street at Montgomery, was the fictional site of the offices of Spade & Archer. The building's exterior features a bird motif. Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

with respect to that item. This was just after the badly wounded and bleeding Captain Jacobi (described as "a thin man") of the docked boat *La Paloma* had staggered into his office, clutching the wrapped parcel, and then keeled over dead in middle of Spade's reception area. And where was this office? Most likely in the Financial District, at 111 Sutter Street near Montgomery, in the Hunter-Dulin building (which had been completed in 1926). Oddly enough, a close look at the building's exterior reveals a bird motif on both the Sutter and Montgomery Street sides of the building. Was this coincidence, or a deliberate choice on Hammett's part?

Hammett himself would have no difficulty locating and recognizing his former residences: 620 Eddy Street (the Crawford Apartments) in the Tenderloin, where he lived for five years and



Readers familiar with the novel will enjoy tracing the action at the sites noted on this map. Courtesy of Mike Humbert.



Hammett wrote *The Maltese Falcon* while living on the fourth floor of 891 Post Street, most likely in this apartment. Sam Spade's apartment is modeled after Hammett's apartment, thought to be no. 401. Local architect Bill Arney lived in this apartment for several years.
 Courtesy of Bill Arney.

poetry-writing detective Robin Thin, who was featured in "A Man Named Thin" and a Baltimore-based detective named Alexander Rush, featured in a story called "The Assistant Murderer." Hammett also began writing book reviews for the *Saturday Review of Literature* and, in early 1926, began his short-term stint at Samuels Jewelers.⁶⁰ His return to writing in 1927 led to the development of novel-length works that were initially serialized in *Black Mask*. The first stage of this process consisted of two lengthy short stories that were

wrote a substantial number of the Continental Op stories; 1309 Hyde Street (the Locarno Apartments), where he wrote two additional Op stories, "The Big Knockover" and "\$106,000 Blood Money"; 891 Post Street (the Charing Cross Apartments), where in a fourth floor apartment, he created the character of Sam Spade and wrote *The Maltese Falcon* (a plaque noting this is positioned near the building's front entrance);⁵⁸ 1155 Leavenworth (the San Loretto Apartments), on Nob Hill, where his family lived⁵⁹ and where Hammett worked on the manuscript of *The Glass Key*, and where he may have created another San Francisco detective that he named John Guild to be used in a future story; and 20 Monroe Street, which may have inspired the use of the nearby Burritt Street in *The Maltese Falcon*. Note that the above-listed addresses comprise an incomplete list since Hammett moved around a great deal during his time in San Francisco. He also moved in and out of a series of rooming houses.

In 1925, in between the creation of the Continental Op and the Sam Spade characters, Hammett also experimented with some other fictional detectives: San Francisco-based,

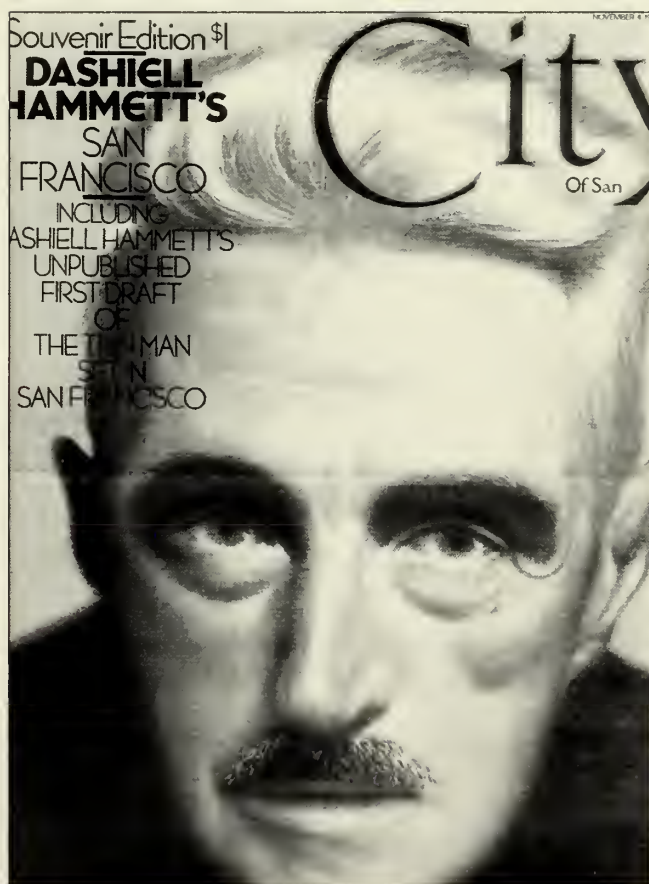
consisted of two lengthy short stories that were actually novelettes and connected tales: "The Big Knockover" and "\$106,000 Blood Money." These were originally published separately in *Black Mask* in February and May of 1927, respectively, and were reissued as one unit in 1943.⁶¹

Hammett would then write four novel-length stories: *Red Harvest* and *The Dain Curse* (1929), both of which featured the Continental Op; *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), which featured Hammett's newly created detective Sam Spade; and *The Glass Key* (1931), with lead character Ned Beaumont, an amateur detective. All four were first serialized in *Black Mask* beginning with *Red Harvest* in 1927.⁶² In the San Francisco City Directory for 1929, for the first time Hammett listed his occupation as "writer."⁶³

Hammett Dashiell writer 1155 Leavenworth
 " Milo Clerk A H Weinrebman Co r Alameda
 " Perry T (Edin) bkpr Am Tr Co bl377 Fulton

Page 732 of the San Francisco City Directory for 1929 in which Hammett, then living on Nob Hill, first listed his occupation in the directory as "writer." Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

In late 1929, before moving to New York City, Hammett began work on another novel, an early version of *The Thin Man* that featured a mulatto detective based in San Francisco named John Guild, who worked for the Associated Detective Bureaus, Inc., housed in the fictional Frost Building. The story involved Guild investigating an out-of-town murder with numerous ties to San Francisco. After writing about sixty-five pages, however, in 1930 Hammett shelved the unpublished story, which would not be published in its original version until 1975. The short-lived *City of San Francisco Magazine* published this early version of *The (First) Thin Man* in a special issue dedicated entirely to Hammett (November 4, 1975).



The cover of the short-lived *City of San Francisco Magazine*, November 4, 1975 edition, dedicated entirely to Dashiell Hammett. This publication was owned by the filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola and ceased publication in 1976.

Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center,
San Francisco Public Library.

In 1933, Hammett would revisit his *Thin Man* story, completely reworking it. He was motivated by his need for money and pounded out his fifth novel within three weeks, while residing at the rundown Hotel Sutton on East 56th Street in New York City.⁶⁴ The John Guild character in the form of a private detective would be dropped, as was the story's San Francisco setting. Hammett created an entirely new detective, Nick Charles, who was actually a retired detective in the story and had previously been associated with the Trans-American Detective Agency. And, unlike Hammett's other detectives, this one had a wife, Nora, a lumber heiress, along with a wire-haired Schnauzer named Asta. Nick Charles was quite different from Hammett's previous detectives. He was urbane, talkative, a hard drinker, and very witty. Mrs. Charles, while literate and sophisticated, was portrayed in the story as rather naïve. The characters of Nick and Nora were based in San Francisco, but the setting for the novel was entirely in New York City (Nick, Nora, and Asta were visiting that city for the holidays). The sleuthing team of Nick and Nora Charles would later inspire countless husband/wife or male/female investigative teams in films and, later, on various television series. It all began with Hammett's Nick and Nora.

While readers can see some elements of the original *Thin Man* story in the rewritten version, the latter is really an entirely new story. The title, though, would remain *The Thin Man*. The cover of the first published edition of the novel featured a photograph of a dapper Dashiell Hammett personifying the *Thin Man*. The detective in the story, Nick Charles, was not the *Thin Man*, however. The title actually referred to another character in the novel, which created confusion with some readers. Hammett also recycled the John Guild name in his rewrite of *The Thin Man*, but created an entirely different character. Now Guild was a lieutenant with the New York City Police Department and was described in the novel as "a big sandy man of 48 to 50 years old." *The Thin Man* would prove to be Hammett's best-selling novel—and his last.



In 2009, Bay Area-based comedian and cartoonist, Michael Capozzola, had a bit of fun with the Sam Spade character.
Courtesy of Michael Capozzola.

Warner Bros. had purchased the film rights for *The Maltese Falcon*, and the first of three films based on that novel would be released in 1931; none would be filmed on site in San Francisco. Not to be outdone, MGM purchased the rights to *The Thin Man* and made six films based on that one novel; much of the second, *After the Thin Man* (1936), would be filmed in the City.

Hammett had indeed become the successful writer that he had strived to become and was enjoying the lucrative benefits of that success. A new phase of his life had begun that would take him down new avenues, but his detective story writing would end with *The Thin Man*. He had become disillusioned with that genre, and as he observed the “mounting tide of societal corruption. The detective’s code of personal honor could have no effect on a dishonorable world,”⁶⁵ felt Hammett.

Hammett never again lived in San Francisco after 1929, nor did he ever again spend any significant amount of time in the City. But he had married there, had his two daughters there, and did much of his best writing there. (Hammett left his family behind when he moved to New York. He and his wife, Jose, would divorce in 1937.⁶⁶) Fortunately, Hammett’s San Francisco hasn’t entirely disappeared. His San Francisco remains all around us; by walking the city’s streets, looking at the Hammett sites that are still a part of its landscape, and by reading his stories, one can readily imagine his life and time in the city. The Samuels Jewelers street clock, a city landmark, remains on Market Street, still ticking away on the sidewalk in front of 856, near the entrance to the Flood Building (856 was the jewelry shop’s final Market Street location from 1943 until it closed in 1990).⁶⁷ Vintage streetcars once again rumble along Market Street as they did for decades, including during the 1920s. And, most of the unique urban and geographical characteristics of the city have successfully transitioned into the San Francisco of the twenty-first century. They’re still with us, as is his old grey Royal typewriter, the one upon which he wrote *The Maltese Falcon*. It’s on display in the rear of the History Center on the sixth floor of the San Francisco



A suggested desktop layout in Hammett's apartment. The alarm clock sits on a copy of Duke's Celebrated Criminal Cases of America, just as it did in The Maltese Falcon when Spade was awakened at 2:05 a.m. by a ringing telephone bringing the news of Miles Archer's death. Courtesy of Mark Coggins.

Public Library, also known as the "new main," on Larkin Street, along with an original edition of the novel. Somehow it's more than fitting that those items reside there, considering how extensively Hammett used the library (albeit the "old main") as a resource and how much time he himself spent in its reading rooms.

Hammett's lifestyle, particularly once he left San Francisco in late 1929, eventually caught up with him. As the years went by, he frequently spent money faster than he could earn it. Despite lucrative earnings from his published works and Hollywood-related projects, he was often flat broke. While his tuberculosis had gone into remission and his overall health improved, Hammett's drinking increased substantially, especially after Prohibition ended in 1933. He

remained a chain-smoker throughout his life and also became addicted to gambling, womanizing, and late nights out on the town in New York City and Hollywood. Those indulgences further contributed to the deterioration of his already-frail condition as the decades passed. In November of 1960, he was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer.⁶⁸

Samuel Dashiell Hammett died in New York City on January 10, 1961. He was sixty-six and had been in fragile health for many years. A veteran of two world wars, Hammett was buried at Arlington National Cemetery as Samuel D. Hammett.⁶⁹

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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THE TENDERLOIN'S FIRST BROTHELS:

223 AND 225 ELLIS¹

by Peter M. Field

PART 1

Curt Gentry's book *The Madams of San Francisco: An Irreverent History of the City by the Golden Gate*² includes, among other things, a well researched history of the principal madams and parlor houses of the Tenderloin District. Gentry traces the origins of one of the Uptown Tenderloin's most famous brothels, 225 Ellis Street, to a madam named Dolly Adams, also known as the Water Queen, in the late 1870s.³ Gentry, who was scrupulous in citing his sources and their reliability, reported that this information was from "the recollections of a local theater historian, as told to him by his father many years ago." Gentry's only other source was William Chambliss,⁴ whose limitations as an historian he gently pointed out.⁵ Still, Gentry's research represented a milestone in the Tenderloin's history, for if his sources were correct, the time period in which this brothel was said to be started made 225 Ellis Street the neighborhood's first house of prostitution. This raises a question: when and how did this residential and small business neighborhood located northwest of Market Street—still called St. Ann's Valley⁶ by old timers—change into San Francisco's middle and upper class hotel, entertainment, and vice district? And how and when did the neighborhood come to be called the Tenderloin?

The change started in 1876, when Elias J. "Lucky" Baldwin's Academy of Music on Market

Street between Stockton and Powell was rushed to completion. It was opened inside the Baldwin Hotel a year before construction of the hotel was finished.⁷ This was the neighborhood's first theater and also its first large hotel. The neighborhood's first office structure, the St. Ann's Building on the corner of Powell and Eddy,⁸ was designed and completed by David Farquharson, one of San Francisco's principal 19th century architects,⁹ the same year as the hotel. And the neighborhood's first music hall, the Tivoli Gardens, was relocated from Sutter and Stockton to the north side of Eddy Street between Mason and Taylor by the Kreling brothers in 1879.¹⁰ These businesses—located within two blocks of each other—were following the growth of Market Street as it extended to the southwest,¹¹ an expansion that was fueled by San Francisco's growing population. In turn, these upscale establishments attracted customers with means to the neighborhood and this clientele attracted other businesses to the neighborhood—for example, high class brothels called parlor houses, so named because they had parlors in which customers were introduced to the prostitutes before making their selections.¹²

Verification of Gentry's assertion that the first of the district's parlor houses opened in the late 1870s would help explain when the neighborhood began to change, as well as offering a way to estimate how long it took to earn its moniker. But how can this claim be verified, especially when



The Baldwin Hotel prior to 1898. The entrance to the Baldwin Theater was planned to be on Ellis Street but was changed to Market Street after the hotel was completed. Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

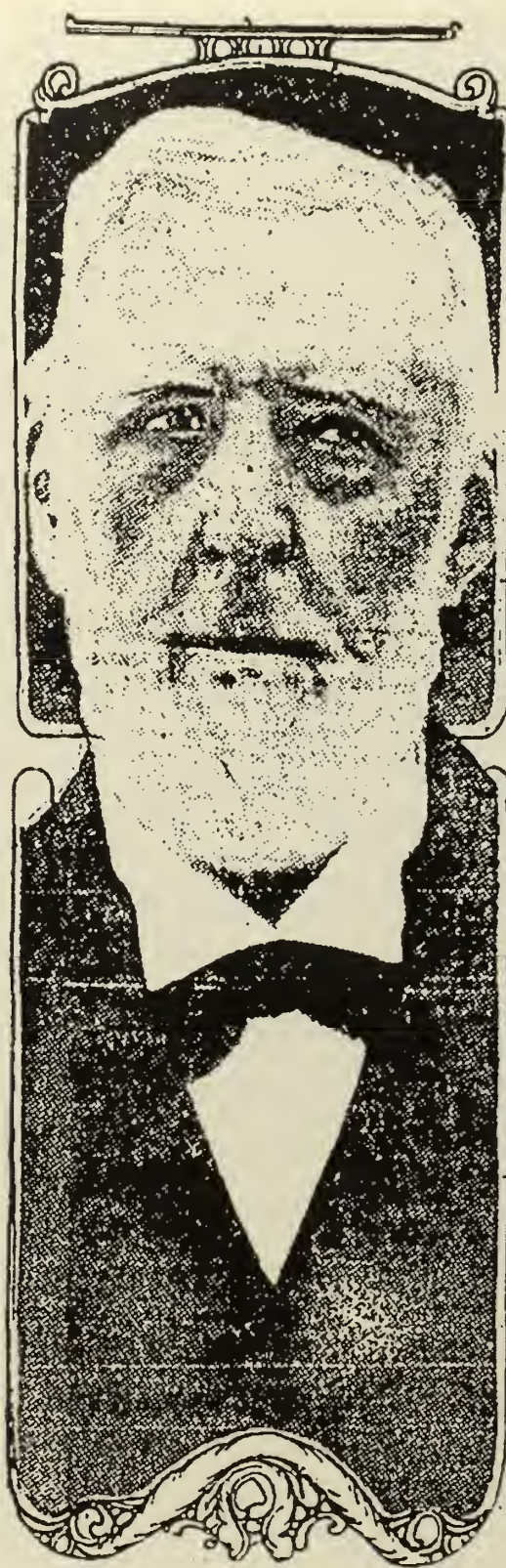


The Tivoli Opera back in its early days when it was still known as the Tivoli Gardens. The Kreling brothers moved the gardens to 26 Eddy Street between Anna Lane and Mason in 1879 after a fire gutted its former location in Judge Burritt's mansion at Sutter and Stockton Streets. The new building was modeled after Burritt's old home. Two of the Kreling brothers can be seen standing on the second-story balcony at the right. Courtesy of the Bancroft Library.

Gentry, a thorough researcher, has already scoured the available sources? This author's method was to use more modern research tools than those available to Gentry, who did his research in the early 1960s, by doing a computer search of some of the primary sources, in particular the San Francisco City Directories¹³ and the newspapers.¹⁴ Sanborn fire insurance maps were also examined.¹⁵

The 1886, 1899, and 1905 Sanborn maps showed that 223 as well as 225 Ellis were labeled F.B. (or Female Boarding, a euphemism for a house of prostitution) in 1899 and 1905, though not in 1886. This suggests that there were two brothels, one in each house. But when did these brothels first open? The city directory search showed that 223 and 225 Ellis appeared for the first time in 1867, part of the building boom following the opening of Market Street past Third and Kearny Streets in 1860 by the construction of the Market Street Railroad.¹⁶ Each house was occupied by a single family with servants.¹⁷ The buildings' architectural footprints were nearly identical and they shared a structural wall,¹⁸ suggesting that they were built as a single project by one builder for one owner. The owner was probably Jacob Schreiber, a bedding dealer¹⁹ who also dabbled in real estate. He advertised number 223 for lease that year as a ten-room house with hot and cold water, marble mantels, chandeliers, French plate glass windows, and a bath.²⁰

The design of number 225 was doubtless similar, and Schreiber advertised it for rent in 1870,²¹ living there himself in 1871.²² 223 was a single-family house through 1882, inhabited by the superintendant of the Central Pacific Railroad's steam ferry company and, at times, the president of what was listed variously as the California or the Colorado Steam Navigation Company. Number 225 was inhabited by single families through 1871. Both addresses became rooming houses, number 223 in 1883 for just a year, and number 225 from 1872 through 1877, after which it was again occupied by single families through 1885.²³ Therefore, in spite of the claims of Gentry's sources, 225 Ellis wasn't a brothel in the 1870s.



Architect and banker David Farquharson in a photograph that appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle on July 14, 1914.

Farquharson built the St. Ann's Building, the Tenderloin's first office structure, in 1877.



When the Market Street Railroad opened Market Street southwest of Third in 1860, it ran on steam dummies. These were steam engines disguised as conventional horse cars so as not to frighten horses. The engines pulled passenger cars that had open upper decks with bench seats. Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Number 225 also wasn't the future Uptown Tenderloin's first brothel. That honor went to its neighbor, number 223. The city directories show listings at that address for Inez Leonard, a well known madam, starting in 1884,²⁴ three years before 225 Ellis's family listings gave way to a second brothel. Miss Leonard had operated a parlor house in Virginia City, Nevada, where she had just two prostitutes in 1880.²⁵ Their occupations were coyly listed in that year's census as dressmakers.²⁶ Miss Leonard told the census enumerator that she

was 33 years old, that she was from Maine, that her father was from England, and that her mother was from Nova Scotia. She abandoned Virginia City for San Francisco in early 1883 after the silver mines had pinched out and the big money had left the Comstock.²⁷ She quickly increased her notoriety when she went back to Virginia City in May of that year under an assumed name to testify as a respondent in the divorce trial of James and Theresa Fair.²⁸ Fair—one of the four Bonanza Kings²⁹ who made their fortunes from the



James G. Fair, one of the four Silver Kings, whose fling with Inez Leonard became one of the grounds for his divorce.
From History of the Bench and Bar in California,
Oscar T. Shuck, ed. Los Angeles:
The Commercial Printing House, 1901.

Consolidated Virginia and California silver mines—had been trysting with Miss Leonard at the age of 52. The newspapers referred to the location of these amours as her house at the southwest corner of Dupont and Post Streets. However, this was probably one of the upstairs rooms of Marchand's, one of San Francisco's French restaurants,³⁰ the building that was actually located on that corner.³¹ In spite of the court's policy of excluding reporters, and despite Leonard's efforts to remain incognito, the divorce trial and its details were reported across the country.³²

When Miss Leonard³³ opened her parlor house the following year at 223 Ellis, she brazenly advertised the establishment in the usually stodgy *Daily Alta California*. On August 1 the following advertisement appeared at the top of the Business

Personals column: "Miss Inez Leonard, formerly of Virginia City, invites the patronage of her former friends to her newly and elegantly furnished rooms . . ."³⁴ A writer for the *Alta* committed a gaffe when he reported Mrs. William H. Moore, the wife of the president of the Central Pacific Railroad's steam navigation company and the house's former occupant, as still living at number 223. (The gaffe was worsened when the article went on to list this address as one of the locations to buy tickets from the lady managers of the six charities supported by the Authors' Carnival Association for a series of fundraising concerts held at the Mechanics Pavilion.³⁵)

In 1885 the city directory listed Miss Leonard, Miss Helen Jewett (whose listing had been carried over from the previous year), and Miss Laura

Business Personals.	
Miss Inez Leonard, formerly of Virginia City, invites the patronage of her former friends to her newly and elegantly furnished rooms, 223 Ellis street, near Taylor. Furnished rooms by the day, week or month.	
Best Garden Hose, 10 Cents, at Lane's, 505 Kearny street.	
Show Card Manufacturer—J. Daniels 505 Market st., Room 11.	
Dr. E. Mazzel, oculist, successor to Dr W. F. Smith, Phelan Building.	
Budweiser on Draught and Sold Only at the LOUVRE, Phelan's Building.	
Parisian Dye Works best in the city, 27 10th st.; offices 714 Washington and 213 Post st.	
Consult Magic Mirror—Past, Present, Future. 252½ 4th st. Ladies, 50 cents; Gents, \$1.00.	
Simkins & Felt, Magnetic Healers. Patients visited if desired. 220 Turk st., S. F., Cal.	
Lawton & Co., Real Estate and General Business Brokers. Money loaned. 11 Geary st.	
Type-Writing and Copying by Pen, Room 31 St. Ann's Building, 6 Eddy st. Elevator.	
Rheumatism cured. Consultation free. Address or call on J. H. Annon, M. D., New Atlantic Hotel, San Francisco.	
Something New: Magic Screen. Highest medals awarded at Mechanics' Fair, W. Little, Agent, 128 Geary st.	

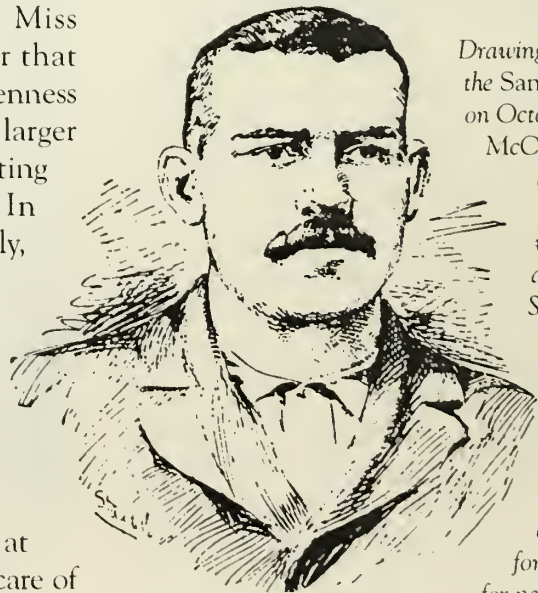
Brothel madam Inez Leonard's *Daily Alta California* advertisement, dated August 1, 1884, announcing the opening of her brothel at 223 Ellis.



*Virginia City in the 1870s, the decade of the Big Bonanza silver strike, when Inez Leonard conducted her business there.
Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society.*

Young at number 223. In 1886 it was Miss Leonard with Mrs. Annie F. Young. After that year, only Miss Leonard was listed. Her brazenness resurfaced several times when she paid for larger listings in capital letters, specifying the renting of furnished rooms as her occupation.³⁶ In other years she was listed more conventionally, or had no listing at all.

In 1887 Miss Leonard was entangled in a scandal when 14-year-old Julia Seiler, the eldest child of German parents³⁷ who lived nearby at 202 Ellis, ran away with a 25-year-old coachman named Dennis McCarthy. McCarthy was employed by a rich politician who boarded his team and rig at the Fashion Stables, where McCarthy took care of them, next door to Miss Leonard's parlor house.³⁸



Drawing of Dennis McCarthy in the San Francisco Chronicle on October 11, 1895.

McCarthy was accused of abducting Julie Seiler to Inez Leonard's brothel, which happened to be across the street from Seiler's home. However, Seiler's later testimony showed she actually begged him to introduce her to Miss Leonard. Eight years later he was convicted of murdering the ranch foreman he was working for near Santa Rosa.

Miss Leonard was arrested after a police investigation revealed that Seiler and McCarthy had spent the night together at her brothel. Frederick C. Merker, a gambler from Sacramento, had to bail her out of jail. Further investigation and a subsequent trial also showed that Leonard introduced Seiler to a madam from San Diego, who disguised the girl's appearance by dyeing her hair and then hid her in a lodging house for several days before moving her to San Diego to work in her brothel.³⁹

In all likelihood, two things that emerged at the trial saved Miss Leonard from being convicted for procuring. The girl's testimony made it clear that instead of being an innocent or unwilling victim of a team of scheming procuresses, she had asked McCarthy to introduce her into 223 Ellis so she could get away from her family and live a "fast" life.⁴⁰ Moreover, her appearance—she looked several years older than her stated age—and her straightforward, unabashed demeanor on the witness stand made it clear that she was far more sophisticated than the average 14-year-old girl.⁴¹ In addition, she accused her Prussian father⁴² of being abusive, a common circumstance among girls who became prostitutes. Because of this, Seiler said she was afraid to return home.⁴³ But Miss Leonard had to testify a year later at the trial of the San Diego madam on a charge of abduction, where she skillfully walked a thin line between compromising herself and incriminating a fellow brothel keeper.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Mrs. Dora A. "Dolly" Ogden, another madam, opened up a brothel at 225 Ellis in 1886,⁴⁵ next door to Miss Leonard's house at number 223. Mrs. Ogden's brothel eventually became one of San Francisco's two most famous (as well as expensive) parlor houses.⁴⁶ Little is known of Mrs. Ogden's history. Her 1880 and 1900 census sheets give contradictory information about her antecedents. If her 1900 census sheet age is taken as accurate, then she was born in October of 1858, making her around 28 or 29 when she started the Ellis Street brothel. She had originally come to San Francisco in 1880⁴⁷ as Mrs. D. Ogden, where she worked as a prostitute at 11 Belden Place, one of 19th century San Francisco's notorious brothel alleys. In 1882 she



Julia Seiler.



Kate Clark.

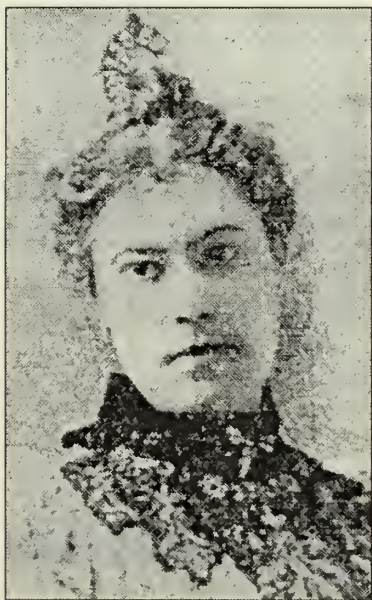
Portraits of teenage prostitute Julia Seiler and San Diego brothel madam Kate Clark as they appeared in drawings in the San Francisco Chronicle on August 8, 1888. The drawings portrayed Seiler as a demure young innocent and Clark as a large-bosomed procuress, but Seiler's testimony showed otherwise.

returned to San Francisco as Miss D. Ogden.⁴⁸

Mrs. Ogden presided at 225 Ellis until 1893 or 1894,⁴⁹ when Mrs. Nina Hayman, a madam from Seattle,⁵⁰ took over. Mrs. Ogden was apparently more circumspect than Miss Leonard or Mrs. Hayman: she was never once mentioned by name in the press during her time at 225 Ellis. She went on to open up another house at 326 Mason,⁵¹ near Geary, between 1899 and 1902.⁵²

However, Mrs. Hayman, who apparently didn't own 225 Ellis, was sued in 1894 in small claims court.⁵³ The suit, for \$65, was filed by the building's owner, who sought to recover the cost of pillowcases, towels, and similar sundries that had been unaccounted for at the time of the sale of the building (they were apparently at the laundry) to

one John Flinn.⁵⁴ Miss Leonard appeared in the papers again in 1893 when she was swindled by a tout who gave her a forged betting slip for a twenty dollar wager on a long shot. The forgery was revealed when the nag surprised everyone by coming in first at odds of 8 to 1, causing the tout to default on the winnings, which in turn prompted Miss Leonard to sue him for her \$160.55 In 1896 Lorraine de la Montanya filed an action for divorce against her husband James in which, among other complaints, she alleged that he had been unfaithful to her numerous times in several parlor houses, including Miss Leonard's, in 1891.⁵⁶ In 1896 Mrs. Hayman was quoted at length during an investigation of a San Francisco minister's infidelities when describing the activities of a dressmaker and manicurist who she had



San Francisco Call portraits of society figures James and Lorraine De La Montanya. She divorced him for, among other things, consorting with prostitutes at Miss Leonard's parlor house.

employed while operating a house in Seattle.⁵⁷

The following month, the story came out about a hobo, one John P. Harmen, a rather homely German-American who on October 11, 1894 found \$53,000 in loot from a train robbery buried next



One of Dolly Ogden's brothel tokens. The front reads, "Dolly Ogden 326 Mason Street," while the back reads "TOURJOURS LE MEME," that is, "always the same." Courtesy of Jerry Schimmel. Photograph by Therese Van Wiele.

to a stand of willows by his campsite near Sacramento. He managed to carry away \$30,000 and transformed himself into Carl Herman or Schroeder, a well dressed gentleman who was fond of wearing diamond jewelry.⁵⁸ He then took a train to San Francisco and moved into the Golden State Hotel in the Uptown Tenderloin in May of 1895,⁵⁹ where he patronized Mrs. Hayman's brothel and several other sporting houses in the district, acquiring a reputation as a big spender. He eventually fell in love with one of the prostitutes, May Devon, and installed her in an apartment at 412 Post between Powell and Mason. He was finally caught by Wells Fargo detectives in February of 1896. They recovered just \$12,000 from Harmens, who was sentenced to three years at Folsom Prison for grand larceny.⁶⁰

In the meantime, next door at 223 Ellis, Miss Leonard was robbed in 1899 by Harry Wilson, a black man who specialized in robbing bordellos. He was admitted into her house on the pretext of being a rich cattleman from Arizona. He knocked Miss Leonard down, rifled through her bureau, and ran off with \$500 in paper currency.⁶¹ This incident seems to have hastened the 52-year-old madam's retirement, for the house is mentioned in the press as being run by Lavina V. Wettleson, also known as Olga Evans, in that same year.⁶² After 1899, Miss Leonard was no longer listed in the city directories.



A portrait of John P. Harmens that appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle on February 13, 1896.

Harmens was also known as Karl the tramp, Charley the Dutchman, and other names, after he was arrested by Wells Fargo detectives in 1896. He stumbled upon a cache of buried loot in 1894 from a railroad robbery that the thieves buried near his campsite near Sacramento the day before he found it. He proceeded to cut a swathe through the Tenderloin and quickly developed a reputation as a big spender.

Wettleson seems also to have had her share of troubles managing the brothel at 223 Ellis. For example, she sued the estate of Jessie S. Potter, a deceased heir of the Charles Lux fortune (Potter was Lux's stepson)⁶³ for \$1,210 from when he was given unlimited credit at the brothel while he was still alive.⁶⁴ The judge ordered Wettleson's attorney to submit an itemized bill, and when he produced it, "the judge remarked that there were some charges that required most delicate consideration on the part of the court." He managed to avoid ruling on the payment of the bill by noting the presence of a number of undated items, interpreting this to mean the lawyer had failed to comply with his order, in effect disallowing payment by the estate.⁶⁵

In 1898, Jessie Mellon, the "house favorite" according to Gentry, took over the brothel next

door at 225 Ellis from Mrs. Nina Hayman, the previous madam, as well as adopting her last name. From this point on the reader is referred to Gentry's excellent book for the rest of the building's history.⁶⁶

Later that year Ethel Le Roy, a prostitute who had recently moved from a Stockton Street parlor house into Jessie Hayman's brothel, was sued by the Stockton Street madam for \$600 for unpaid lodging bills.⁶⁷ The madam had Le Roy's trunks, packed with her expensive dresses, impounded by the police until the suit was settled.⁶⁸ Two months later Le Roy contracted with a collection agency to sue Conrad Hewson, a middle-aged remittance man who spent his quarterly allowance on her and then borrowed small sums of money back from her until his next check arrived. The suit was for \$650—the total amount of the loans she claimed to have made to him the previous spring or summer. The article said that Hewson lived at St. Mary's Hospital, "although not ill or disabled at present," implying that he had some sort of episodic illness, perhaps psychiatric.⁶⁹ He died two years later.⁷⁰

In 1905, another one of Hayman's girls, Alma Russell,⁷¹ as well as Hayman herself,⁷² were questioned in the matter of the San Francisco Tax Collector, an elected official who had absconded with a large amount of money from his office. The following month another one of her girls, Lillian Meredith, swore out a warrant for assault against a man named Charles "Jockey" Lew, a disbarred jockey and longtime crooked bookmaker,⁷³ who she said hit her on the face while she was entering Pratt and Tierney's Oriental Saloon on Mason Street with her pet dog.⁷⁴ The apparent cause of the assault was his attempt to collect on a \$10 debt.⁷⁵ However, the charge was called into question when Meredith failed to appear to testify. Moreover, the appearance of the alleged assailant, "Jockey" Lew, showed "a weazened (sic) and diminutive person of uncertain age . . . [with] a swollen jaw," and hinted that Meredith had actually assaulted him.⁷⁶

After Miss Leonard's departure in 1899, the parlor house next door at 223 Ellis managed to stay out of the newspapers until a 1905 article



The St. Ann's Building on the northwest corner of Powell and Eddy Streets in 1880. The two-story structure next to it is the Carville Carriage Company factory. A corner of the Baldwin Hotel is seen just across the street.
 Courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

revealed that yet another madam, a woman named Roma Graham, was operating it.⁷⁷ The incident that brought this to light was the knifing of a former Olympic Club boxing instructor, James A. McGinley, at Miss Graham's. He was stabbed by William F. Hopkins, a grand-nephew of Mark Hopkins, one of the four Central Pacific Railroad barons,⁷⁸ who was the current majority owner of the St. Ann's Building on the northwest corner of Powell and Eddy Streets in the heart of the future Uptown Tenderloin. Hopkins had frequently visited the brothel over several weeks, apparently becoming infatuated with Miss Graham. At his last visit, he reportedly hit her during a jealous argument. McGinley, who was also there, intervened and prevented Hopkins from hitting her again.⁷⁹ Hopkins tried to assault McGinley, who refused to fight him on the grounds that Hopkins was a cripple.⁸⁰ McGinley then ejected him through the inner door into the vestibule, apparently locking the door after him. Hopkins hid there instead of leaving and waited for McGinley. When the latter stepped through the door ten minutes later, he was stabbed by Hopkins. McGinley managed to disarm him in spite of several wounds, and had Hopkins arrested for assault to murder.⁸¹ McGinley rebuffed a later attempt by the defendant's mother to bribe him into dropping the charges.

The case went to trial in 1906 and Hopkins was convicted by a jury of the lesser charge of simple assault. The judge, angry that the jury hadn't convicted Hopkins of assault to murder, remanded Hopkins into custody to await sentencing. Moreover, he refused a defense motion to release him on bail while the conviction was appealed, saying he wouldn't treat Hopkins differently than any other defendant of lesser means.⁸² Three days later the judge sentenced him to the maximum penalty of 90 days in jail.⁸³

Two weeks after this the judge threatened to investigate the Broadway Jail when he learned that Hopkins had been incarcerated there instead of the more customary County Jail (located far out of town, where San Francisco City College is today). It seems the judge heard that the jailers were letting him out every other day on the pretext

of visiting the dentist, for he was seen around town on the streets and in various saloons.⁸⁴ Three and a half weeks later he was pardoned by Governor Pardee during the aftermath of the earthquake and fire, presumably through the influence of his wealthy family.⁸⁵ There were no further mentions of 223 Ellis after this incident.⁸⁶

But what about Dolly Adams? If she wasn't the madam who started the parlor house at 225 Ellis, then why did Gentry's sources say that she was? The only primary source to offer a possible solution to this riddle is the city directory listings, where it was found that the original madam at 225 was Dolly Ogden. Thus, it would appear that Gentry's theater historian, as well as William Chambliss, confused one Dolly for the other. They were both well known inhabitants of the Uptown Tenderloin demimonde, and they both had the same first names.⁸⁷ However, it was Miss Adams who got all the press, even though Mrs. Ogden was in San Francisco over a much longer period of time.

PART 2

Who was Dolly Adams? She was born Ellen Loretta Callahan around 1860⁸⁸ in New York. She was the fourth of at least 10 children, all of them girls except one boy.⁸⁹ Her parents were from Ireland, and her father was a longshoreman who died when she was still young. Her mother had to go to work to support the family, so Miss Adams, who was reportedly willful to begin with, grew up with little supervision and became a wayward and independent young girl. She lost her virginity when she was 16 and became a prostitute in a New York parlor house.⁹⁰ Around two years later, the madam of this house introduced her to another madam, Mary Ellis,⁹¹ who along with Carrie Maclay (see footnote ³⁰), persuaded Miss Adams to come with them to San Francisco in 1878.⁹²

Sometime during her youth she had become a good swimmer and had developed the ability to hold her breath under water for very long periods of time.⁹³ While in San Francisco she swam at North Beach and was well known for her water



*Antique cabinet card circa, early 1880's, showing Dolly Adams "The Water Queen" of San Francisco (swimmer).
Courtesy of Google images.*

skills. Somewhere along the way, Adams developed an act in which she was known as the Water Queen. She appeared on stage in tights and dove into a glass-sided water tank to demonstrate diving and swimming techniques,⁹⁴ as well as eating food, drinking milk,⁹⁵ and smoking cigarettes under water⁹⁶—the latter feats presumably accomplished through legerdemain. A newspaper article mentioned photographs of her appearing in a mermaid costume as well as in tights, so there was apparently more than one version of her act.⁹⁷ Of course, at least some of her performances were an excuse for audiences to see the diminutive but unusually well proportioned blonde (in some accounts she had brown hair)⁹⁸ swim under water and stand around on stage in a wet, skin-tight bathing suit.

In 1879, Miss Adams became famous in San Francisco when she attended the annual fundraiser for the Policeman's Widows and Orphans Fund, called colloquially the Policeman's Ball. That year's event was special because former President Ulysses S. Grant had stopped in the city and had agreed to attend the fête, which was held at the Mechanics Pavilion at Eighth and Market Streets. He was marching at the head of the solemn processional entry of the guests of honor at the beginning of the first dance when:

"Suddenly, out of the gay throng, dashed a somewhat famous if slightly frail beauty of the period—Dolly Adams. She was attired in the conventional costume of Cupid. As well as the bow and arrow, which formed

two-thirds of that attire, she carried a lily—emblem of purity. And before the General could recover from the first shock of her greeting, she had pinned the delicate blossom to the lapel of his coat. It was said that the indomitable Grant, who had never flinched through the horror of 100 pitched battles, wilted like a wet dishcloth (sic) before this unexpected onslaught.”⁹⁹

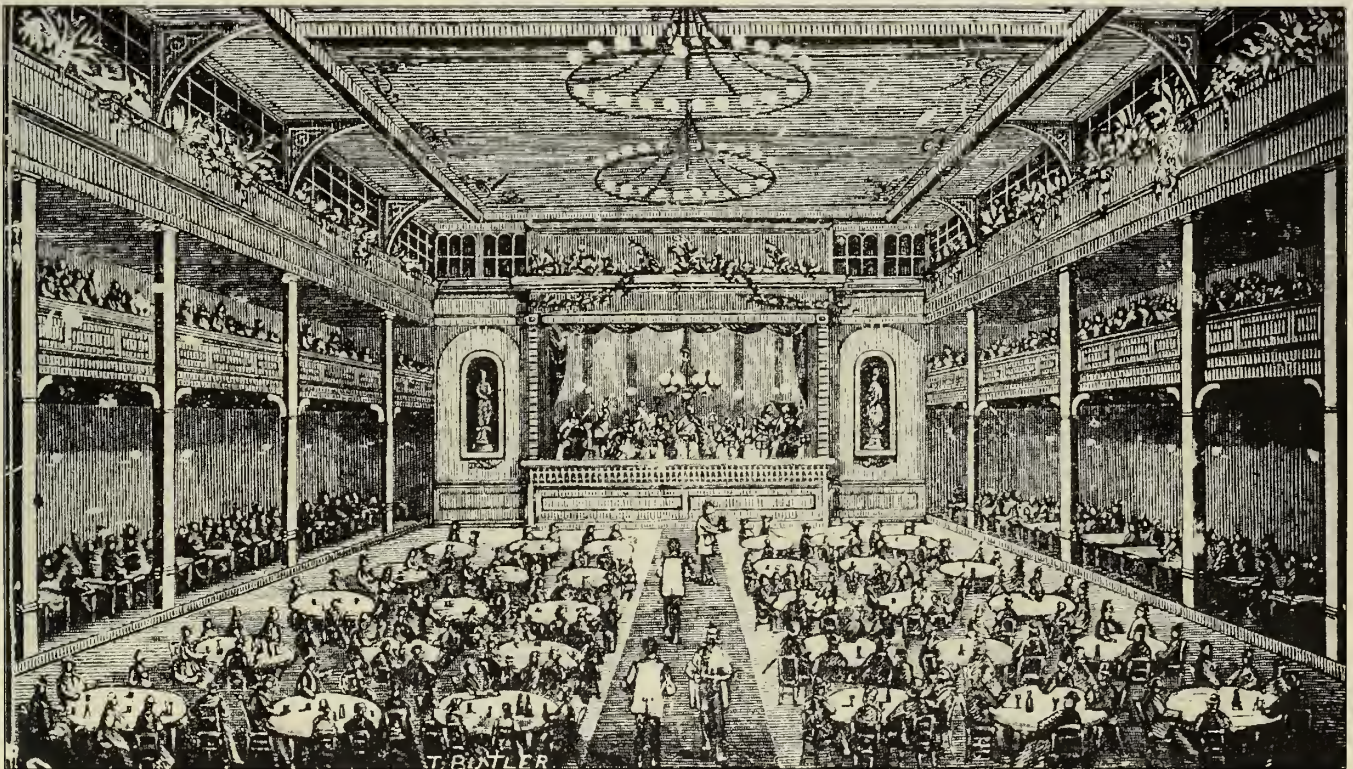
She won first prize for best costume.¹⁰⁰

Another part of her fame derived from “her laughing eye and pearly teeth, and magnificent hair of a brownish color which fell to her knees. She made many friends among the ‘bloods’ and dollars and diamonds were showered upon her.”¹⁰¹ Gentry wrote that she was introduced to San Francisco sporting life during this time, and it would seem this was done either by Ellis, who had brought her out to the West, or Maclay.¹⁰² One of them—it’s not clear which—was probably the unnamed madam who Gentry said persuaded Adams to perform an indecent exhibition in her

water tank. But the plan failed for lack of a male partner capable of performing with her under water.¹⁰³

Miss Adams seems to have first performed her Water Queen act in San Francisco, at the Bella Union and the Alhambra theaters, at least according to Gentry’s sources.¹⁰⁴ However, a search of the California Digital Newspaper Collection and California Historical Newspapers Web sites failed to find any advertisements, reviews, or other mentions of her performing in California.

When Miss Adams returned to New York, she reportedly worked at The Aquarium at Broadway and Thirty-fifth Street and at Bunnell’s Museum at Ninth Street and Broadway.¹⁰⁵ However, an exhaustive search of the hundreds of advertisements and reviews for The Aquarium in the New York newspapers failed to turn up any mentions of Dolly Adams,¹⁰⁶ though there were at least three other water queens advertised under their stage names during 1877, its second year of operation.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the performances of an



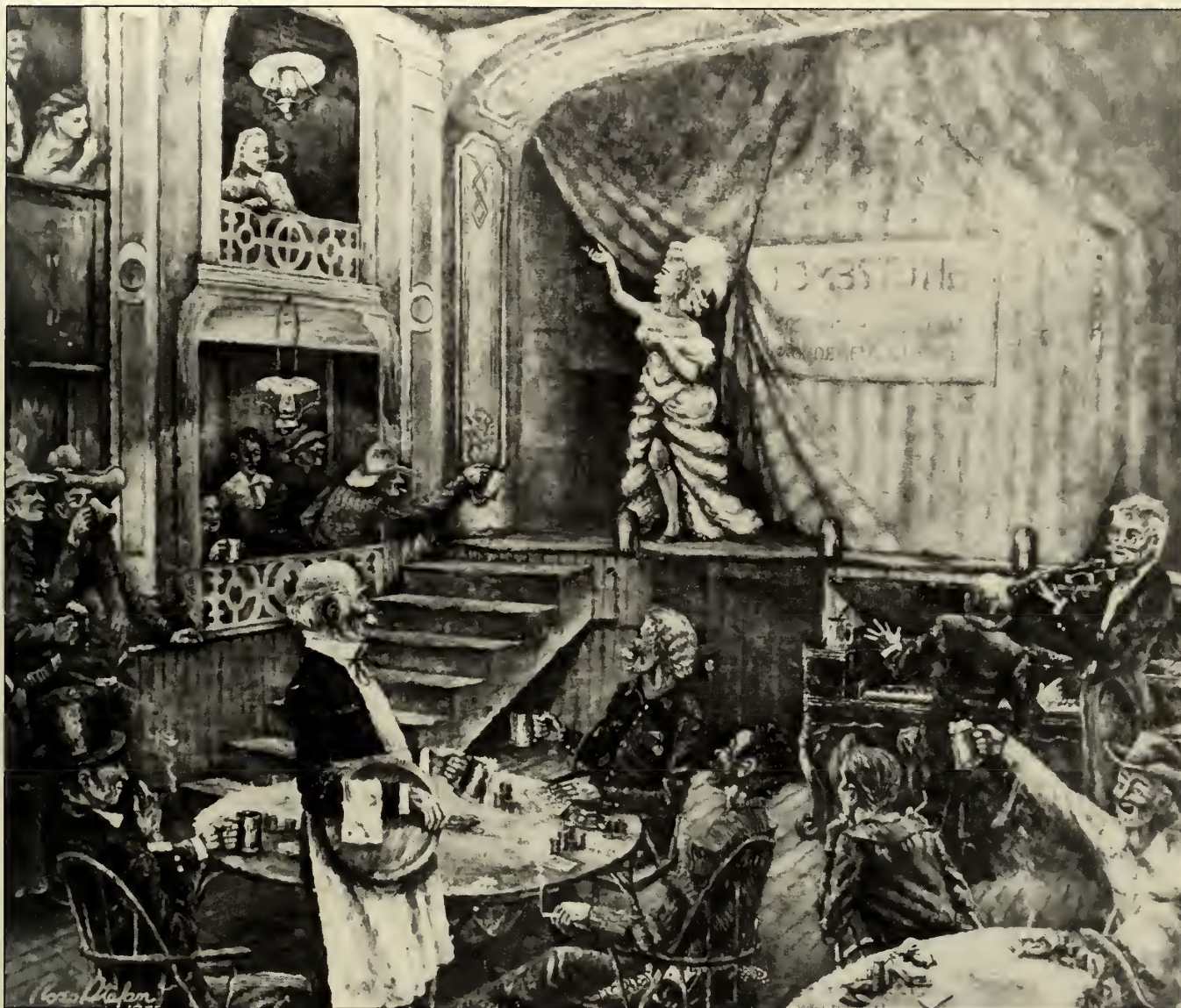
A drawing of the interior of the Tivoli Gardens beer hall shortly after it moved to Eddy Street, before it started presenting light opera. The drawing appeared in the Pacific Coast Musical Review on September 26, 1915.



The front of the Bird Cage Theater as it remains today in Tombstone, Arizona. Dolly Adams's performance reportedly precipitated a shootout between the Earp and Behan factions of the town. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society.

unidentified "Man Fish" and a "Water-Queen" were mentioned in several Aquarium advertisements and reports in 1880.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the Aquarium probably offered these performances as one of its stock attractions or as a periodic special attraction, hiring different nameless women over the years for the part, of who Miss Adams was apparently one. Either way, it didn't seem to have been particularly salacious, at least as it was performed at The Aquarium, for columnists stated that the majority of its customers were children and that they would enjoy the show.¹⁰⁹ As for Bunnell's Museum, there were only 22 newspaper advertisements and mentions of this venue. While they failed to mention either Miss Adams or any other Water Queens, the acts that were listed included the Tattooed Lady, the Rubber Man, the Electric Boy, and some snake charmers.¹¹⁰

While she was still living in San Francisco, Adams seems to have taken her show on the road from time to time, for there is a newspaper report of her performing one night at the famous Bird Cage Theater in Tombstone, Arizona Territory. This was during the height of the Behan-Earp feud. The Bird Cage was where everyone went at night. The Behan/cowboy/cattle rustler/Democrat faction would sit in the boxes to the right of the stage, while the Earp/gambler/stage coach robber/Republican faction would occupy the boxes on the left. If one side cheered the act, the other side booed it, and this frequently led to gunfire. The saloon was crowded the night Miss Adams performed, her reputation apparently having preceded her, and the cheering and booing were consequently lustier than usual. So was the exchange of gunfire, which left twelve men dead and seven more wounded.¹¹¹



Drawing of a performer at the Bird Cage Theater in Tombstone, Arizona. Twelve men were reportedly killed and another seven wounded during an exchange of gunfire over the merits of Dolly Adams's performance there.

Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society.

By the 1880s Miss Adams's fame had become national. For example, a woman photographer in Boston who specialized in women's vanity portraits kept on hand a number of photographs of female celebrities, including "Mrs. Langtry and Bernhardt down to Maude Branscombe and Dolly Adams" so that her stage-struck customers could choose the look they wanted for their own portraits.¹¹² A Chicago swimming instructor cited Dolly as an example of the many actresses who are good swimmers.¹¹³ She was also cited as an example of women who have made their own

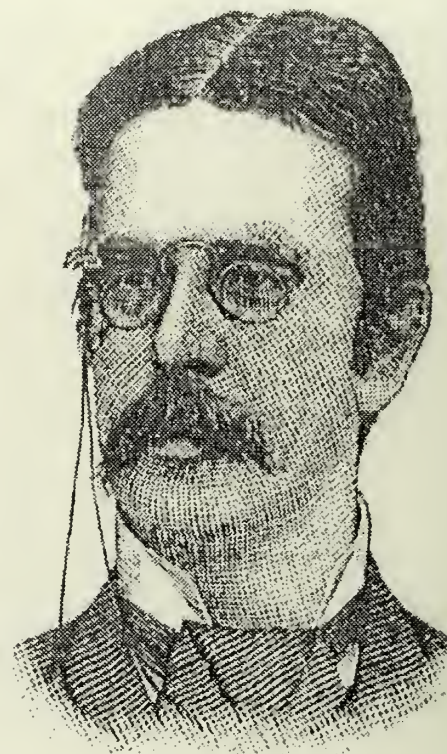
fortunes, though in Miss Adams's case the fortune was reported to be small, around \$15,000.¹¹⁴ There were also other women performing similar acts, like La Selle the Water Queen at the Standard Theater,¹¹⁵ and Lurline the Water Queen in Europe.¹¹⁶ But they weren't necessarily copying Miss Adams, for there had been other Water Queens before her.¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, Miss Adams had become addicted to opium while she resided in San Francisco,¹¹⁸ and was living a dissipated life that eventually drove off most of her friends and

forced her return to New York to see her mother, who she had been supporting.¹¹⁹ While there she invested her money, of which a considerable portion was in diamond jewelry,¹²⁰ (an apparent influence of Diamond Carrie Maclay, herself a great gem collector)¹²¹ in operating a theatrical lodging house in New York's Tenderloin District,¹²² then known as Satan's Circus,¹²³ for two years in the early 1880s. She also developed a certain notoriety. For example, Mrs. Emma Uhler, whose brother had killed Uhler's lover in New York, committed suicide in Miss Adams's lodging house, despite her attempts to get medical attention for the woman.¹²⁴

By 1886 Miss Adams had quit the boarding house business and needed medical attention herself, being desperately ill with bronchitis and pneumonia. She was cared for by her mother and eight sisters in her room at a cheap lodging house called the Oriental Hotel. These relatives also kept a close eye on Miss Adams's jewelry and other valuables to make sure that no one would get hold of them when she passed away. They kept her at the hotel in spite of, or perhaps because of, a doctor's prognosis that she would die unless she was taken to a hospital.¹²⁵ But they gave up and abandoned her when she hung on, after which she was finally admitted to a local medical institution.¹²⁶

By July 1886 she had recovered enough to track down a man who had absconded with a valuable bond belonging to her. The object of her search, Col. William H. Gilder, was about to leave on a five-year expedition to the Arctic in an effort to be the first man to find the North Pole.¹²⁷ At some point Miss Adams had obtained a thousand dollar elevated railroad bond. Just before one of her trips to San Francisco, she asked Gilder to ascertain if it was worth anything and gave it to him to hold for her while he did this.¹²⁸ He never returned it and Miss Adams couldn't find him when she came back. A year or two later she finally ran into him in Paris, where he told her he had given the bond to one of his cousins for safe keeping and promised to have him send it to her in Paris. But the bond was never sent and that was the last she saw of Gilder until 1886,



Colonel William H. Gilder, as he appeared in *The Daily News* on August 5, 1886. Gilder was the apparent absconder of Dolly Adams's \$1,000 elevated railroad bond. Adams tracked him for three years in Paris and New York before Gilder finally made good on the bond through his sponsor, New York Herald publisher James Gordon Bennett.

when she found him again, this time back in New York. He now claimed that the cousin who had the bond had embezzled it, along with other funds, and had fled to Canada. By this time Miss Adams had had enough and promptly had Gilder arrested on the eve of his departure to the Arctic,¹²⁹ causing him to miss his ship¹³⁰ and forcing him to get his sponsor, James Gordon Bennet of the *New York Herald*, to make good on Miss Adams's purloined bond¹³¹ in exchange for dropping the complaint.¹³²

Miss Adams did not appear in the press again until 1888, when it was reported that she had died at age 26 on board the steamship *City of New York* from the cumulative effects of syphilis, opium addiction, and pneumonia. She had left five weeks before to tour the Orient and was sailing back to San Francisco on her way to New York because of her mother's death.¹³³ Her body was embalmed

aboard ship, and she was buried in San Francisco, though the newspapers didn't report where.¹³⁴ The Public Administrator applied to administer of what was left of her estate—a little tin trunk that contained 15 five-dollar gold coins, one English sovereign, \$10 in Hong Kong money, a Metropolitan Elevated Railway Company of New York bond worth \$1,000, six pieces of diamond jewelry, a gold watch, a chatelaine,¹³⁵ and several fans. Oddly, he was unable to identify any heirs.¹³⁶ The lawyer appointed to administer her estate used all of it to pay the expenses of administration,¹³⁷ presumably including his bill.

Thus ended the story of Dolly Adams. Her legacy was thousands of publicity photographs of herself that surfaced in strange ways after she died. In one example, a man named J. G. Crawford shot and killed his wife's ex-husband, who had been stalking and threatening her for years. At the morgue, the deceased ex-husband's pockets were found to be full of photographs of actresses and other well known women—including a photo of Dolly Adams.¹³⁸

PART III

As for the question of how the Tenderloin got its name, there are any number of theories. A sampling of them follows:

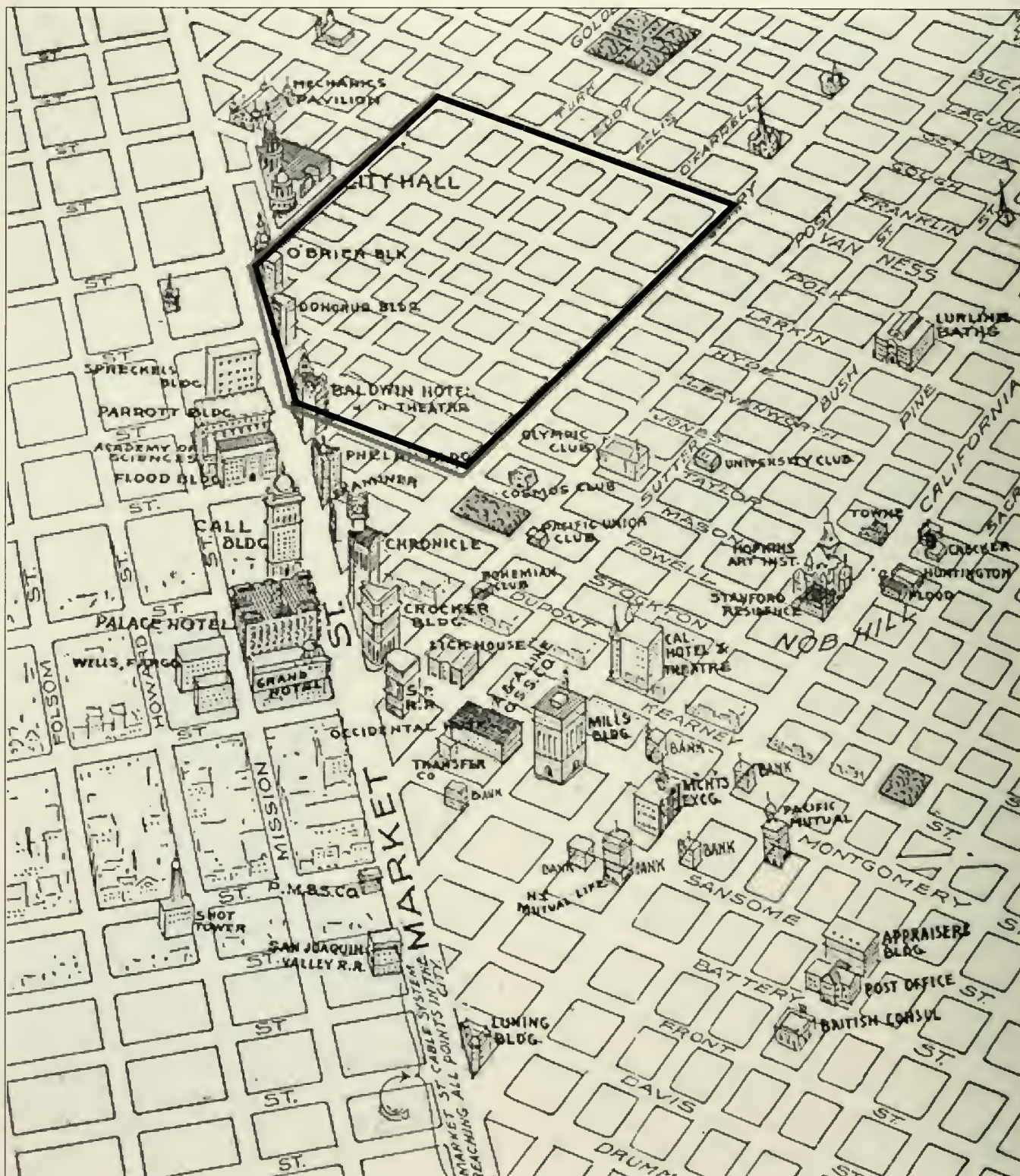
1. Neighborhood police officers were able to afford better cuts of meat for their tables by getting higher rates of pay for hazardous duty in a high crime area.¹³⁹
2. The neighborhood's geographic boundaries approximate the shape of a tenderloin steak.¹⁴⁰
3. The district was where all the restaurants or steak houses were.¹⁴¹
4. The district was where the "meat rack" was located, that is, where underage male prostitutes operated.¹⁴²

Unfortunately, these theories all share the same flaw—there is little documentary evidence to support them.

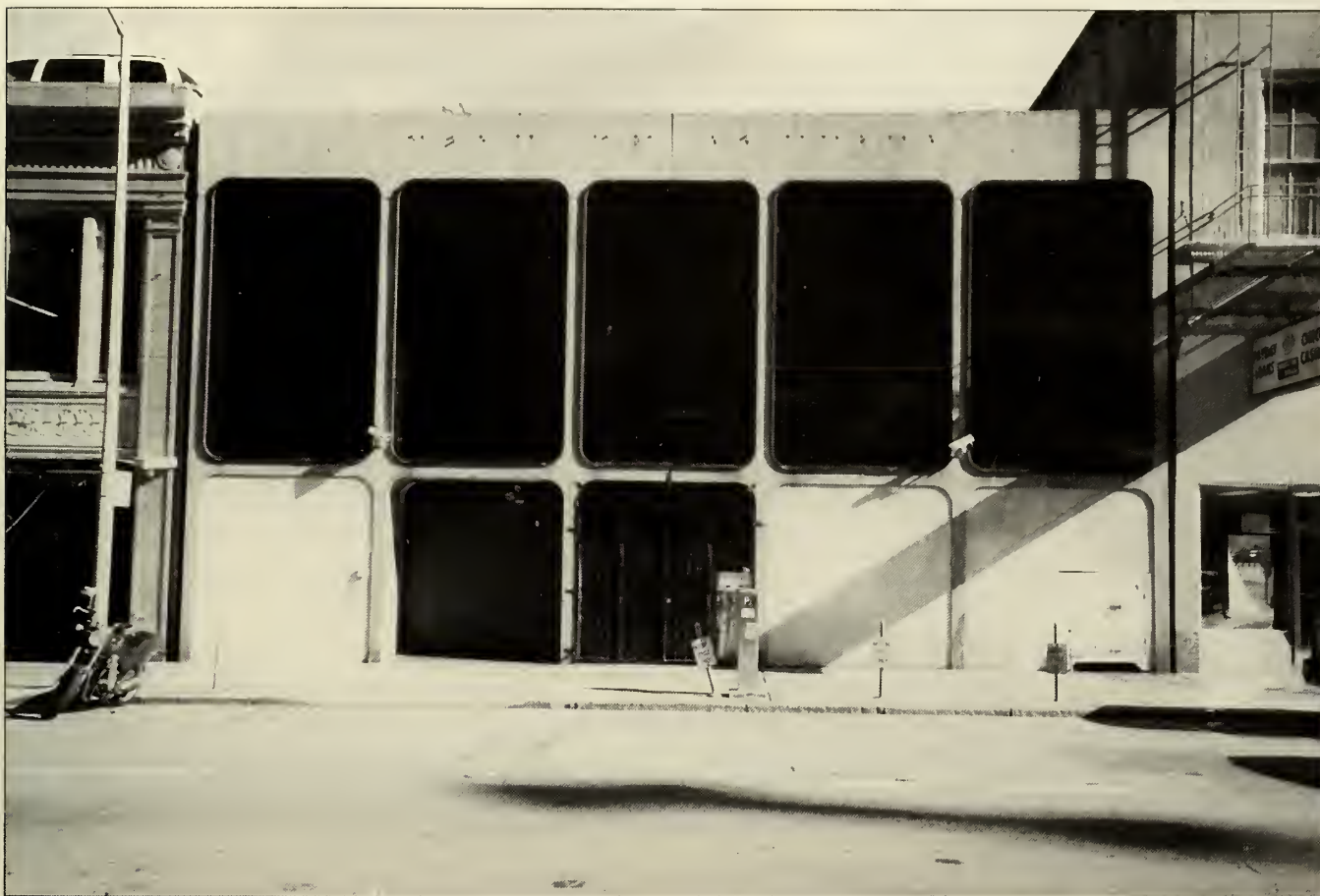
A more likely explanation for the origin of the name goes back to the days of New York's Tammany Hall. In the 1860s, a legendary police officer, Alexander "Clubber" Williams, got his start in Manhattan's Lower East Side, where he was assigned as a patrolman. Williams, a former shipyard carpenter who was a very strong man, developed a simple method of keeping the peace in his part of this famously violent neighborhood. Whenever he was assigned to a new patrol route, he spent the first two days learning who the neighborhood's toughest characters were. He then beat them into submission with his billy club, and continued almost daily in this fashion over the next four years. This earned him his sobriquet, and he seems to have relished the notoriety it brought him: he once said, "There is more law in the end of a policeman's nightstick than in a decision of the Supreme Court." As a demonstration of just how effective his method



Alexander "Clubber" Williams in the January 13, 1893 edition of *The World*. Williams rose steadily from the rank of New York patrolman to become chief of police. A possibly apocryphal story attributes the Tenderloin District's name to him. However, the name did originate in Manhattan's notorious "silk stocking" vice and entertainment district, apparently sometime around 1887, when the newspapers first started using the term.



Bird's Eye View Map (detail), 1896. Outlined in black is the area that was characterized as the "tenderloin."
Map courtesy of Nancy Pratt Melton.



Today this rather unprepossessing building stands on the site of the former parlor houses at 223 and 225 Ellis Street. It was built in 1963 as a Bank of America branch office. It now houses several small businesses, including a surveillance equipment firm.

Courtesy of the author.

was, he took a group of reporters for a walk around one of Manhattan's larger blocks after leaving his gold watch and chain dangling on a corner lamp post at Third Avenue and Thirty-fifth Street. When they returned to the corner, the watch and chain were still there, apparently untouched by human hands.

The newspapers protested this style of law enforcement, but it did little good. Williams, who was both Irish and connected with the Tammany political machine, received promotions with almost the same regularity as his pay envelopes. In 1876 he had made captain and was given the old Twenty-ninth Precinct, which included Satan's Circus, New York's "silk stocking" vice district, which ran from Twenty-fourth to Fortieth Streets between Fifth and Seventh Avenues,

where the most expensive parlor houses and gambling clubs operated. This new assignment was going to make Williams a rich man. Of course, he had always grafted while he was a New York cop, but the amount was never very high since neighborhoods like the Lower East Side—being poor—didn't generate nearly the amount of revenue that a rich neighborhood like Satan's Circus could provide. Williams was so grateful for the transfer that when asked how he liked his new assignment, he was alleged to have said, "I've been living on chuck steak for a long time and now I'm going to get a little of the tenderloin."¹⁴³ That brought the term into popular usage, which is probably how the press got hold of it. The name stuck. But exactly when did the term become popularized?



This three story red brick building on the southwest corner of Ellis and Mason is still standing in Tenderloin photographer Mark Ellinger's beautiful photograph. It was the Uptown Tenderloin location of two of gambling and prostitution boss Jerome Bassity's many illicit businesses. One of his brothels was run by his mistress, brothel madam Stella Hayes, on the second and third floors of this building. He opened his gambling venue, the Thirty-third District Assembly Club, in the basement after a heat wave forced the closing of the brothel. Many of these buildings from the Uptown Tenderloin days are still standing. Courtesy of Mark Ellinger.

The story of Williams's rise in the New York Police Department and the numerous investigations into his violence and grafting¹⁴⁴ are documented by many sources, though the tenderloin quote may have been apocryphal. But a search through the America's Historic Newspapers Web site showed clearly that the term *tenderloin*, as used to describe a neighborhood, appeared for the first time in a newspaper in New York in 1887¹⁴⁵ and then spread across the United States.¹⁴⁶ As newspapers in different cities started referring to their local entertainment and vice districts as tenderloins, the term became ubiquitous in the same way that words like Kleenex and Xerox morphed from upper to lower case. The term *tenderloin* had reached San Francisco by 1891.¹⁴⁷

This was when the San Francisco newspapers started referring to several different neighborhoods as tenderloins: the Barbary Coast, South of the Slot, the Chinatown alleys, the Dupont and Kearny Street corridors and their allies south of California Street, and their alleys, and the area south and southwest of Union Square.¹⁴⁸ After the 1906 earthquake and fire, the downtown retail and shopping districts moved first to Van Ness Avenue and then to the Western Addition along the Fillmore Street corridor between Hayes and California Streets until the downtown area could be rebuilt.¹⁴⁹ The vice and entertainment districts that had been located south and southwest of Union Square followed the retailers to the Fillmore Street area. Brothels, saloons, cafes, and gambling joints were opened on some of the side

streets between McAllister and Geary, causing San Francisco to start referring to this neighborhood as the Uptown Tenderloin to distinguish itself from its former downtown incarnation. The vice operators were quickly chased out of this middle class residential and shopping district and back to their former neighborhoods, but the name stuck.¹⁵⁰

Hence the Uptown Tenderloin's name came into being. The first two brothels to follow the new customer base provided by the first hotels, office building, theaters, and music halls in the future Uptown Tenderloin did so in 1884 and 1887, attracting complementary businesses (such as saloons catering to the demimonde and quasi-legal high stakes gambling clubs),¹⁵¹ as well as competing businesses (such as other parlor houses).¹⁵² Also moving into the area, for the same reason, were various classes of criminals, who preyed on each other as well as on visitors. In addition, support businesses such as hotels, lodgings, liquor stores, restaurants, and other concerns serviced the floating population of workers who followed the jobs created by these businesses.

Of course, this general trend toward vice chased many, if not most, of the neighborhood's original pre-1876 residents elsewhere. Thus, it makes sense that the area became referred to as a tenderloin (or the Tenderloin) during the 16-year period between 1876 and 1891. And so St. Ann's Valley, a hamlet near the edge of the Mission Bay marshes in the 1850s, became the Tenderloin of the 1890s and the Uptown Tenderloin of post-earthquake San Francisco. Over the decades the name kept changing—from the Uptown Tenderloin to the Tenderloin District after World War I, from the Tenderloin District to the TL in the 1980s, and from the TL to the 'Loin in the 1990s. At the time of this writing (2011) the old neighborhood is changing again, trying to transform itself from a central city slum into the legitimate entertainment, hotel, and restaurant district it used to be, when it shared the streets with parlor houses, gambling clubs, and concert saloons. Who knows what its next name will be?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter M. Field is a longtime San Francisco resident who is currently researching and writing a history of San Francisco's Tenderloin District. He also leads history walks of the Tenderloin and Richmond Districts for City Guides.

NOTES

1. This article is part of a research project by the author tracing the history of San Francisco's Tenderloin District from its origins in the 1840s to the present.
2. Curt Gentry, *The Madams of San Francisco* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964)
3. Curt Gentry, *ibid*, 166.
4. William H. Chambliss, *Chambliss' Diary; Or, Society As It Really Is*, New York, Chambliss and Company, 1895, Chapter XII.
5. Curt Gentry, *ibid*, 161–164.
6. This was the area's original name in the 1850s before development flattened out the valley that it was named after.
7. Baldwin's Academy of Music, in spite of its gorgeous architecture and interior beauty, was unsuccessful at first, primarily because the papers quickly labeled it a fire trap ("Danger Ahead," *Daily Alta California*, March 22, 1876, 1). Baldwin rushed it to completion so quickly that it opened a full year before the hotel that was supposed to house it was completed, giving its patrons the unique experience of going to a theater inside a building that was still under construction. But the hurried finish resulted in a less than optimally designed venue, so when patrons discovered for themselves that the newspaper warnings were correct, they stopped going. Baldwin immediately added the additional aisles and exits recommended by the papers, and patronage picked up again. ("The Alterations in Baldwin's Academy of Music," *Daily Alta California*, March 24, 1876, 1; "Baldwin's," *Daily Alta California*, May 29, 1876, 1.)
8. "Our Delmonico's," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 9, 1877, 8; San Francisco City Directories (San Francisco, various publishers, 1850 through 1982).
9. Anne Bloomfield, "David Farquharson: Pioneer California Architect", *California History*, 59, 1, Spring 1980, 16-33.
10. San Francisco City Directories, *ibid*.
11. "The stride of travel toward the Market-street outlet from the city has compelled the abandonment of the old and familiar locations for the new . . . theaters, hotels and places of resort have been compelled to withdraw from the old quarters and advance with the

- march of progression to the southwest." ("Elegant Establishments," *Daily Alta California*, September 23, 1877, 1.)
12. Nearly the same events occurred in 1963, almost a century later. That year Conrad Hilton finished building the neighborhood's first major hotel since the Roaring Twenties, on the western half of the block bounded by Mason, Ellis, Taylor, and O'Farrell Streets, and then expanded the project to take over the rest of the block a decade later. This attracted several other large hotel projects, as well as several theaters. It also brought a new customer base to the area, triggering a flood of X rated movie theaters, bookstores, and massage parlors, as well as an exponential increase in the number of prostitutes and drug dealers working the Tenderloin. ("There's big money made, straight and on the sly," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 20, 1977, 1.) In both centuries the principle was the same: the new legitimate businesses attracted the customers who attracted the illegitimate businesses.
 13. San Francisco City Directories as searched in sfgenealogy.com.
 14. The following websites were searched for mentions of the Ellis Street addresses, as well as for the names of the various madams and other historical figures involved with these brothels: the California Digital Newspaper Collection, Pro Quest's *San Francisco Chronicle* data base, America's Historical Newspapers, and California's Historical Newspapers.
 15. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (Sanborn Map Co., 1886, 1899, and 1905), San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco History Center.
 16. Walter Rice, Ph. D. and Emiliano Echeverria, *When Steam Ran on The Streets of San Francisco* (Forty Fort, Pennsylvania, Harold E. Cox, 2002) 11–13).
 17. San Francisco City Directories (see note 13).
 18. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (see note 15).
 19. Schreiber was an importer of pulu, ("New Advertisements," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, November 29, 1856, 4) "a soft, elastic vegetable fiber of yellow-brown hue obtained from the young fronds of Hawaiian tree ferns, used for mattress and pillow stuffing" (*Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, 1967 edition). Pulu is a Hawaiian word meaning "something wet" according to Random House's dictionary. Schreiber was a president of the Board of St. Mark's Church on the south side of Geary between Stockton and Powell in the 1860s before the area became a shopping district ("The German Lutheran Church," *Evening Bulletin*, July 21, 1863, 3), a member of the Board of Managers of the Industrial School (a kind of boys reformatory) during the same decade ("Industrial School Officers," *Evening Bulletin*, June 6, 1865, 3), a sometime candidate for Eighth Ward supervisor as a Democrat on the National Union Party ticket ("Miscellaneous," *Evening Bulletin*, September 4, 1866, 2), and was bankrupt in 1870 ("Assignee's Sale In Bankruptcy," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, December 12, 1870, 4). Later that decade he became involved in mining stocks ("Mining Incorporation," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, May 1, 1873, 3).
 20. "To Let," *Daily Alta California*, February 23, 1867, 2.
 21. "Today's Advertisements," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, April 11, 1870, 2.
 22. San Francisco City Directories (see note 13).
 23. San Francisco City Directories, *ibid*.
 24. San Francisco City Directories, *ibid*. A search of the census records showed that the downtown brothels were still located east and northeast of Union Square up to 1880, with none yet west of Stockton Street. Nor has the author's extensive research into the Tenderloin's history found any others in the 1870s or early 1880s that preceded either of these houses. However, see end-note 44 on next page.
 25. United States Census, 1880, as searched in Ancestry.com.
 26. *Ibid*.
 27. Oscar Lewis, *Silver Kings* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 276–277.
 28. "The Pacific Slope. A Divorce and Four millions for Mrs. Fair," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 13, 1883, 8. Mrs. Fair was represented by Richard S. Mesick, a well known Virginia City lawyer who himself had an affair with another well-known San Francisco madam—Diamond Carrie Maclay ("The Wages Of Sin," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 16, 1893, 5). Leonard was escorted into the courtroom by Mesick's partner, Richard V. Dey, who was the executor of Maclay's will when she died ("Carrie Maclay's Will," *The Morning Call*, October 18, 1891, 10).
 29. Rand Richards, in his book *Historic Walks in San Francisco* (San Francisco, Heritage House, 2001, 266–267) characterized Fair as "self aggrandizing, with a huge ego, he thought of himself as the brains of the outfit, looked at his partners mostly with contempt, and loved gloating about how he took advantage of others in business deals . . . and had a reputation as a slumlord because he failed to pay for upkeep on any of his properties—lease agreements shifted the burden of maintenance to his tenants."
 30. Marchand's was next door to Diamond Carrie Maclay's two parlor houses at 205 Post and 108 Morton Streets. The restaurant's south side looked out over Morton Street during many of that thoroughfare's most infamous years as one of San Francisco's brothel alleys. The fanciest French restaurants—of which Marchand's was a typical example—were a San Francisco institution. While respectable families could eat in their main dining rooms without compromising themselves, they were also meeting places for unrelated single men and women of a certain social class. Thus, dining in one of the screened off mezzanine rooms would jeopardize the reputation of the woman, and dining upstairs in one of the locked rooms made the matter of reputation moot.

31. San Francisco City Directories (see note 13).
32. For example, in Washington D.C. ("Senator Fair's Wife," *National Republican*, May 8, 1883, 1.)
33. Or Mrs.? Both newspaper articles and city directories were inconsistent on this point.
34. "Business Personals," *Daily Alta California*, August 1, 1884, 2.
35. "The Six Charities," *Daily Alta California*, November 23, 1884, 5.
36. In 1889, 1892, and 1896, the city directory printed her name in capital letters in large point, boldface type, a marked departure from usual parlor house practice, which normally emphasized discretion and anonymity.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (see note 15).
39. "A Girl Betrayed," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 16, 1887, 6.
40. "He Was Too Kind," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 14, 1887, 6.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. Seiler may have straightened out her life after this because the 1900 census showed her as living with her mother and several younger siblings in a house on Bush Street in Pacific Heights when she was 27. Two other significant pieces of information were listed on the census sheet: her father was no longer living with them, and her father and mother's last child was born the month before Julia ran away to 223 Ellis. A possible interpretation of these data is that Herr Seiler and his wife separated shortly after—or before—Julia was returned to her family.
44. "Abducted Julia," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 8, 1888, 8.
45. San Francisco city directories (see note 13); Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (see note 15). The city directories were published every April. However, five Japanese women were arrested in February of that year for running a brothel at 116 Ellis, the former home of St. Ann's Valley pioneer John O. Hanscom. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether Ogden's establishment was the neighborhood's second or third brothel. Since there is no evidence that the Japanese brothel stayed open very long, the author considers 225 Ellis to be the neighborhood's second brothel. See endnote 24 above.
46. Curt Gentry, *The Madams of San Francisco* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964) (164, 189-192).
47. "Passenger Lists," *Daily Alta California*, April 26, 1880, 4.
48. "Passenger Lists," *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, April 1, 1882, 8.
49. San Francisco City Directories (see note 13).
50. "Mattie Overman In A New Light," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 1, 1896, 8.
51. United States Census, 1900; San Francisco City Directories; San Francisco phone books.
52. Ogden distributed advertising tokens from this house to likely referral sources for customers. Ogden's tokens had her name and address on one side, and the phrase *Tout Le Meme* (always the same) on the other. (Jerry F. Schimmel, "Frisco's Brothel Tokens," *Token and Medal Society Journal*, 43, 6, December 2003, 146-154.) These tokens were distributed to hack drivers, newsstand operators, bartenders, waiters, doormen, hotel clerks, house detectives, and anyone else who might send a customer. If the customer actually showed up and spent money, the referent would receive a little red envelope by messenger with a kickback—generally a gold coin representing 10% of whatever the customer spent. (see note 12, 164, 214).
53. Then called the Justice Court.
54. "Trifling Troubles," *Daily Alta California*, September 14, 1894, 7.
55. "That Revolver Race," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 19, 1893, 5.
56. "Wants To Be Free," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 21, 1893, 12.
57. "Mattie Overman in a New Light," *ibid.*
58. "The Cash Found by a Roving Tramp," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 13, 1896, 11.
59. "He Was a Modern Monte Cristo," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 14, 1896, 9.
60. "The Cash Found by a Roving Tramp" (see note 58); "The cursed good luck of Charley the Dutchman," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 10, 1949.
61. "Wilson No Strangler But A Bold Thief," *The San Francisco Call*, September 27, 1899, 7.
62. "Says Potter Was Not Ill," *San Francisco Call*, November 28, 1900, 12; "Kershow Will Case in Court," *San Francisco Call*, November 19, 1901, 5; "Miss Wettleson's Suit Dismissed," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 26, 1900, 7. Miss Evans (also known as Miss Wettleson) herself started out as a prostitute at a brothel at 17 Stockton Street between Market and O'Farrell at least as far back as 1893 ("Olga Was Wicked," *The Morning Call*, May 25, 1893, 10).
63. "Gets a Million," *The Evening News*, December 23, 1897, 2.
64. Up to the beginning of WW I, newspapers reported a number of incidents in which rich parlor house patrons—who were routinely given credit at these establishments—died while still owing money to the brothels, forcing the madams to sue their estates in order to collect.
65. "Jesse Potter's Fun Was of the Expensive Kind," *San Francisco Call*, May 5, 1900, 9.

66. Curt Gentry, (see note 2), 183–208 & 213–214.
67. There was an earlier prostitute, also named Ethel Leroy, who was killed in 1894 by a jealous lover. Her real name was Effie King, hence the punning alias (“A Deed Of Blood,” *The Morning Call*, August 8, 1894, 10).
68. But Le Roy’s attorney managed to get her trunks returned through a court clerk’s error (“Trouble Over Trunks and a Clerk’s Mistake,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 22, 1900, 14).
69. “Sues Former Lover to Recover a Loan,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 16, 1900, 9.
70. “Deaths,” *The San Francisco Call*, July 4, 1902, 11.
71. “Jury Probes Tax Office Methods,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 11, 1905, 16.
72. “Believe Money Was Hidden Here,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 19, 1905, 16.
73. “Better Racing is in Prospect,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 2, 1896, 4; “Semper Lex Wins in the Handicap,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 22, 1896, 34.
74. “Strikes Woman on Face,” *The San Francisco Call*, December 30, 1905, 5.
75. “Tout Uses Force to Collect from Woman,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 30, 1905, 5.
76. *The San Francisco Call*, December 31, 1905, 35.
77. “Capitalist Jailed for Wielding Knife,” *The San Francisco Call*, July 18th, 1905, 14.
78. “The Eastern Shore,” *Daily Alta California*, March 2, 1888, 8.
79. Hopkins had a history of impulsive and conflicted relationships with women. He fell in love with a nurse of an apparently different social class who was caring for the wife of the owner of the hotel that Hopkins was staying in during a visit to Highland Springs in 1899. The married her a month later, taking up residence with her at the springs. But he seems to have been a bit of a philanderer (“He Dined with the Servants,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 9, 1901, 16). They went through several years of on and off divorce proceedings (“Hopkins Scores the First Point,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 28, 1901, 7; “Says His Wife Harasses Him,” *San Francisco Call*, February 22, 1902, 7; “Betrothals Are Abroad in the Air,” *San Francisco Call*, May 23, 1904, 5) while Hopkins tried to hide his wealth by transferring it to his sister (“Real Estate Transactions,” *San Francisco Call*, January 11, 1901, 11; “Mrs. Hopkins’ Suit,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 1, 1901, 14) and to his investment company (“Real Estate Transactions,” *San Francisco Call*, June 27, 1901, 11; “Hopkins Divorce Case,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 9, 1901, 10).
80. The newspapers didn’t explain what this meant. However, during divorce proceedings initiated by his wife, Hopkins was reported to have responded in part by saying, “that he being crippled and lame, needed attention from the servants” (“He Dined With The Servants,” *ibid.* While there was a William Hopkins who lost two of the fingers of his left hand when he was ten years old in 1869 (“Local Matters,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, July 6, 1869, 3; “Accident to a Boy,” *Daily Alta California*, July 4, 1869, 1), this was a different person than William F. Hopkins, who wasn’t ten years old until 1888 (*Daily Alta California*, March 2, 1888, 8).
81. McGinley also seems to have been an Uptown Tenderloin habitué. He brought charges against a police officer two years later for assaulting him inside a saloon at the southeast corner of Golden Gate and Hyde (“Says Patrolman Assaulted Him,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 16, 1908, 52).
82. “Jury Finds William Hopkins Guilty of Simple Assault,” *San Francisco Call*, March 15, 1906, 4.
83. “Wealthy Youth Sent to Jail,” *San Francisco Call*, March 18, 1906, 34.
84. “Favors Shown Rich Prisoner,” *San Francisco Call*, April 1, 1906, 45.
85. “Governor Grants Reprieve,” *Los Angeles Herald*, April 27, 1906, 2.
86. 223 Ellis madam Roma Graham went on to open another brothel in the Fillmore District after the 1906 earthquake and fire (“Mooney Blames Police Judges,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 14, 1907, B33) until she was chased back into the Tenderloin and reopened at 162-164 Turk (*San Francisco Chronicle*, September 20, 1908, reprinted in “The Wayback Machine,” in *Datebook, San Francisco Chronicle*, September 21, 2008).
87. Thus, Gentry’s assertion that the madam under whose sway Adams often found herself—presumably Carrie Maclay—arranged trysts for her in French restaurants with wealthy admirers, makes more sense when she is viewed as a courtesan instead of a madam. Another assertion of Gentry’s, that Adams kept the richest customers to herself, may have confused Adams with Maclay or Leonard. These latter two women did indeed keep at least some of their richest customers to themselves. In Maclay’s case this was Judge Richard Mesick. “The Wages of Sin,” (see note 13). In Leonard’s case this was James G. Fair. “The Pacific Slope: A Divorce and Four Millions for Mrs. Fair” (see note 28).
88. United States Census, *ibid.*; “Dolly Adams Found Dying,” *The Sun*, April 3, 1886, 5.
89. United States Census (see note 25); “Dolly Adams Found Dying,” *ibid.*

90. "The 'Water Queen'", *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 28, 1888, 8. She was listed as Dolly Adams, instead of Ellen Callahan, on the passenger list of the train she took to San Francisco two years later, ("Overland Passengers," and since this was before she developed her stage act, it is inferred that Dolly Adams was her house name when she was a prostitute.
91. "Morton Street: The Real Story," Peter M. Field, MS.
92. *Ibid.* The article says this was in 1877, but this is apparently incorrect as the first mention of her coming to San Francisco with Mary Ellis is in 1878 ("Overland Passengers," *ibid.*). She made the same trip again with Miss Ellis the following year ("Overland Travel," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 22, 1879, 3).
93. Gentry (see note 2); "The Water Queen's Story," *The Sun*, March 20, 1881, 3.
94. "Death of Dolly Adams," *The Morning Call*, January 28, 1888, 7.
95. "Colonel Gilder Arrested," *New-York Daily Tribune*, July 14, 1886, 1.
96. "Dolly Adams Found Dying" (see note 85).
97. *Ibid.*
98. "Feminine Corsages," *St. Paul Daily Globe*, May 8, 1886, 11. Or was she a brunette? ("The 'Water Queen'" see note 94).
99. "San Francisco's Thoroughfares," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 8, 1920, E6.
100. "The 'Water Queen'" (see note 94).
101. "The 'Water Queen'," *ibid.*
102. It may well have been Maclay. She was an opium addict, and Gentry writes that the madam who introduced her into San Francisco sporting circles is also the one who introduced her to opium, on which Adams also became dependent (Gentry see note 2).
103. (See note 2).
104. (See note 2).
105. "Dolly Adams Found Dying," (see note 94).
106. This was done by an online search through the America's Historical Newspapers website.
107. "Amusements," February 13, 1877, 3; "Amusements," *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 11, 1877, 3; "Amusements," *New-York Daily Tribune*, December 27, 1877, 3.
108. "Tom Thumb at the Aquarium," *New-York Daily Tribune*, April 20, 1880, 8; "Music And The Drama," *New-York Daily Tribune*, April 23, 1880, 4; "The Aquarium," *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 6, 1880, 4. The Aquarium opened in 1876 and closed in 1881 ("Amusements," *New-York Daily Tribune*, October 6, 1876, 7; "Home News," *New-York Daily Tribune*, April 28, 1881, 8). Her dates there were mostly likely sometime during its last two years, given that her first performances were in San Francisco and that there is no evidence that she was in San Francisco before 1878.
109. *Ibid.*
110. "Amusements," *The Sun*, April 2, 1882, 7
111. "A Tragic Tale of Tombstone," *Omaha Daily Bee*, February 20, 1888, 3.
112. "Bazarre (sic) Boston Beauties," *Omaha Daily Bee*, March 8, 1883, 2.
113. "How the Girls Swim," *National Republican*, July 20, 1883, 7.
114. "Queens of the Ranch," *Daily Alta California*, June 17, 1887, 6.
115. "Standard Theater," *Daily Alta California*, January 1, 1884, 8.
116. "Notes," *Daily Alta California*, December 23, 1886, 8.
117. Ads show Lurline the Water Queen performing at the Olympic Theater at 624 Broadway when Dolly would have been only 14 or 15 years old ("Amusements," *New-York Daily Tribune*, November 24, 1875, 3).
118. "Sentence of Opium Smokers," *Evening Bulletin*, March 27, 1882, 2.
119. "The 'Water Queen'" (see note 94).
120. *ibid.*
121. "The Wages Of Sin" (see note 28).
122. "By Poison in Poverty," *The Sun*, February 15, 1884, 1
123. Herbert Asbury, *The Gangs of New York* (New York, Thunder's Mouth Press, 1998), 161-162; Luc Sante, *Low Life* (New York, Vintage Books, 1991) 113; Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995), 1161.
124. "By Poison in Poverty" (see note 122).
125. "Dolly Adams Found Dying" (see note 88).
126. "No Hope For Dolly Adams," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 16, 1886, 3; "Nearing the End," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, April 15, 1886, 3.
127. He had made two previous Arctic expeditions ("The North Pole," *The Daily News*, August 5, 1886, 3)
128. This is born out by a newspaper item listing Miss Adams as a train passenger on her way to San Francisco shortly after the date she said she gave the certificate to Gilder. (*Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, February 24, 1883, 4.
- 129 "Going to the Pole on Bail," *The Sun*, July 14, 1886, 1.
- 130 "Colonel Gilder Gets Left," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 15, 1886, 8.
131. "The North Pole Expedition," *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, July 20, 1886, 1.

132. "Col. Gilder May Go North After All," *The Sun*, August 12, 1886, 4.
133. She may have stopped by to see her old friend Diamond Carrie Maclay at Maclay's parlor house at 205 Post. As ill as she apparently was, one wonders if this trip may have been in the nature of a final journey. Another hypothesis is that she went to China to seek a cure for her opium addiction. Or perhaps she went to seek a more stable opium supply.
134. "Burial Of Dolly Adams," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1888, 8. The location of her body is still unknown.
135. A clasp or chain worn at the waist for holding keys.
136. "The Probate Court," *Evening Bulletin*, February 13, 1886, 3; "The Probate Court," *Evening Bulletin*, February 15, 1886, 3.
137. "The 'Water Queen's' Estate," *Daily Alta California*, August 14, 1888, 1; "Dolly Adams' Estate," *Evening Bulletin*, August 14, 1888, 1.
138. "A Bullet Ends It," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 3, 1888, 8.
139. Louis K. Lowenstein, *Streets of San Francisco* (Berkeley, Wilderness Press, 1996), 118.
140. Taken from the author's notes of conversations with participants in his historic walking tours of the Tenderloin District for San Francisco's City Guides.
141. *ibid.*
142. *ibid.*
143. Luc Sante, 17 and 373; Herbert Asbury, *The Gangs of New York*, 161-162, 217-219, and 230-232.
144. During one investigation he was asked how he could afford a country estate on a policeman's salary. He answered that he had made some successful real estate investments in Japan, where no one was likely to go to verify his claim.
145. "At Republican Headquarters," *The Evening World*, November 8, 1887, 1.
146. The telegraph had been around for more than four decades by then.
147. "Runyon's Diamond," *Daily Morning Call*, February 26, 1891, 6. A search of the California Digital Newspaper Collection, California Historical Newspapers, and the America's Historical Newspapers websites, as well as ProQuest's *San Francisco Chronicle* database in the San Francisco Public Library, showed that this is the earliest use of the term *tenderloin* to be used by a San Francisco newspaper to describe San Francisco's vice districts. The term was used frequently after this.
148. The California Digital Newspaper Collection et al; *ibid.*
149. *Ibid*; "Gives Bad Checks to Saloon Men," *San Francisco Call*, January 30, 1907, 16.
150. Before the 1906 earthquake and fire, it wasn't always clear which neighborhoods the newspapers were referring to when they wrote about the tenderloins. The term *tenderloin*, when used in the lower case, could mean any of several disreputable areas where prostitution, gambling, and crime were known to flourish. Or, the terms *tenderloin* or *Tenderloin* could refer to all these neighborhoods together. While the origin of the term Uptown Tenderloin is obscure, one wonders if some enterprising early 20th-century madam, gambling czar, or cafe owner came up with the name as a way to set this particular tenderloin apart from the others.
151. All of which started showing up in the district during the last half of the 1880s. See San Francisco City Directories.
152. San Francisco City Directories. (see note 13).

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